

"The Gospel Ministry and the Theme of Romans"

Romans 1:1-17

Lesson 1

Purpose

Your students will feel the excitement of Paul for the ministry of the gospel. The presentation of the gospel of God in Romans is not only a doctrinal dissertation; it is also a personal testimony. It is truth that changed the life of Paul and the lives of the Roman believers. In this first chapter, your students will see the importance of all they are about to learn and so prepare themselves to be changed by it. Martin Luther, who saw, not only his life, but also the entire world change after studying Romans, said this about the book, "This Epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes" (*Preface by Martin Luther* (1552), xiii).

In A Nutshell

"Gospel" means good news. The word appears four times in this introductory passage (vv. 1, 9, 15, 16) where it is presented as the theme of the book of Romans. In this first lesson, we are introduced to the journalist of this news. Above all else, he is a minister of the gospel. In this short passage, we will learn what the gospel ministry is all about through the eyes (and from the heart) of the apostle Paul.

To The Testimony!

Paul, a Minister of the Gospel

1:1	1. Paul begins his letter with the customary reference to himself as the author. He then
Gal. 1:15	describes himself in three ways in order to lay claim to the qualifications required by
Acts 9:15	someone whom God would use to write this book of the Bible. He confesses that he is first
Acts 13:2	"the servant of Jesus Christ", and second "called to be an apostle." What is the third claim
	Paul makes to the qualifications necessary to write this letter? After looking up the three
	passages listed to the left, describe what Paul means by this third qualification. How did
	God qualify Paul in this way?

Answer: The third qualification is that Paul was "separated unto the gospel of God." Galatians 1:15 speaks of Paul's birth being an act of God related to separating him unto the gospel. He was created and designed for the task by virtue of his birth. Acts 9:15 tells us that Paul was saved for this special task of the gospel ministry. Finally, Acts 13:2 shows that the commissioning of the Holy Spirit's specific call was instrumental in Paul's separation unto the gospel of God.

Application: The ministry of the gospel is a ministry we all share according to the Great Commission (Matthew 29:19-20). In this context, every Christian can claim this third qualification Paul describes himself with. The gospel is the reason we are here. We are separated unto it. We are designed for the gospel ministry by virtue of

our birth and background, called to the gospel ministry by virtue of our salvation, and though perhaps not vocationally called to missions work as Paul was in Acts 13:2, the vocation He has directed us to is our mission field according to the commission of Christ.

Notes:

Interesting Insight!

“Such is the sole essential work and purpose of his life. He is separated to the gospel of God – isolated from all other ruling aims to this. In some respects he is the least isolated of men; he is in contact with all of human life. Yet he is ‘separated.’ In Christ, and for Christ, he lives apart from even the worthiest personal ambitions. Richer than ever since he ‘was in Christ’ (16:7) – in all that makes man’s nature wealthy, in power to know, to will, to love – he uses all his riches always for ‘this one thing,’ to make men understand ‘the gospel of God.’ Such isolation, behind a thousand contacts, is still the Lord’s call for His true followers.” [H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans* (n.p.: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 1958; reprint, Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications), 19.]

Paul’s Love for the Romans, Recipients of His Ministry

1:7 **2. Verses 2-6 of this passage focus specifically on what the good news of the gospel is all about. We will cover these along with verses 16-17 later in the lesson. But first, let’s take a look at how Paul feels about the recipients of his gospel ministry. Here too he begins with a description. How does Paul describe the Romans? What does this description have in common with the way he described himself in verse one? How would this description impact Paul’s view of his gospel ministry?**

Answer: Paul describes the recipients as “beloved of God” and “called to be saints.” The idea of “calling” is prominent in both Paul’s description of himself and the Roman believers. Paul’s high view of those to whom he was called to minister undoubtedly motivated his desire to accomplish that ministry. Even more compelling is the fact that this high view was not actually his own, but God’s.

Application: The gospel of God is unique among the religions of the world in its lofty view of the role of the one saved by grace. He is a special object of God’s love, called to be a holy person (“saint” means “holy one”). Holy people are not uncommon in the religions of the world. Popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, ayatollahs, rabbis, and even gurus lay exclusive claim to the title “holy person” in the context of these “other gospels.” Only in Christ are all who believe beloved of God and called to be saints.

Notes: When dealing with this passage, commentators emphasize that the “calling” Paul speaks of is far more than an “invitation.” They emphasize that this calling is an effectual appointment. Moule’s comment is typical, “‘Invited’ is not an adequate paraphrase. The ‘called’ man is the man who has been invited and has come; who has obeyed the eternal welcome; to whom the voice of the Lord has been effectual. . . . That meaning in the Epistles is different from that in the Gospels, where the words ‘chosen’ and ‘called’ are contrasted: the called are many, the chosen few” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 24-25). Clearly, extraordinary achievement does not make a believer a holy person, nor was Paul an apostle because he had led a successful campaign for the position. God’s grace is foundational.

1:8-10

3. Living among four million inhabitants, with Nero on the throne, and the decadence of pagan sport, culture, and slavery all around them, the Roman Christians did not enjoy a “Bible belt” society. Yet against these odds, their faith not only persisted, it flourished. Its testimony spread to the whole world. How did Paul respond to what he had heard of the Roman believers?

Answer: Paul responded as one who “served” God with his “spirit in the gospel of His Son” would respond. He often thanked God for their faith, he unceasingly exercised a burden of prayer for their well being, and he hoped that the will of God would include a successful journey to see these believers.

Application: The word translated “serve” is a unique one in the original language (latreuo). In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word is used to translate the second commandment of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:5, “thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor *serve* them.” The word refers to the priestly service of the temple, and its emphasis is upon the idea of worship. It “focuses attention on his service in its vertical aspect as an offering of worship to God.” [Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 58.] There is a sense in which Paul believed that his gospel ministry was an act of worship. And as such, it was a ministry empowered with prayer.

Notes: We understand from the book of Acts that the Roman believers were unique among first century Christians located in Gentile territory in that they had not seen the church planting ministry of the apostle Paul. Paul wrote Romans from Corinth around A.D. 57-58 (see Acts 20:2-3 and Romans 15:25), and Paul did not get there until around A.D. 60-61 (Acts 28:16).

Though the Bible is silent on the question, three theories exist about the origin of the church at Rome. Historical tradition, later adopted by the Roman Catholic Church, assigned the credit to the ministry of Peter. But this idea is impossible to reconcile with the books of Acts and Romans and is consequently not widely held today. The second idea is that the church saw its beginning with Pentecost (Acts 2:10). This view seems to gain support from Paul’s reference to Adronicus and Junias in 16:7, whom Paul describes as “in Christ before me.” The final idea credits the success of the church to converts of Paul, who had emigrated to the city. Paul’s ministry had impacted folks like Pricilla and Aquila, who had been expelled from Rome prior to Claudius’s death in A.D. 54 (Acts 18:2, and Seutonius’s *Life of Claudius* 25:4). This couple later moved back to Rome (Romans 16:3). The truth of this church’s origin evidently lies somewhere in a combination of the last two views.

From The Honeycomb

"For I long to see you"
Romans 1:11

The verb Paul uses to describe his desire to see the Roman Christians is used about ten times in the New Testament. In all but two of these times, the word describes the desire of believers for believers (or God for the Spirit in James 4:6). The word teaches us that Christians ought to have a strong desire to fellowship with other Christians.

But how strong? Let’s take a look at the two uses in which the word is used to describe a strong desire for something other than another believer. These passages will help us understand how strong this desire ought to be. Look up each passage below, and complete the sentence by putting a subject and object after the verb “desires:”

2 Corinthians 5:2,	desires
1 Peter 2:2,	desires

How strong ought our desire for fellowship be? How can we demonstrate this quality in our lives?

Answer: Christians desire their resurrected bodies (2 Corinthians 5:2), and infants desire milk (1 Peter 2:2). Our desire for the fellowship of believers ought to be intense. Too often a selfish, shallow, and casual attitude is reflected in the hearts of Christians when it comes to opportunities for Christian fellowship.

1:11-15 **4. Paul clearly had a strong desire to see these believers. What reasons does he give in these verses for wanting to see them with such eagerness? How does this compare with the reasons many Christians gather in local churches today?**

Answer: Paul gives a number of reasons for wanting to meet with the Roman believers: 1) to impart to them a spiritual gift which would help establish them in the faith (v. 11), 2) to encourage and be encouraged in the faith (v. 12), 3) to bear fruit as among other Gentiles (v. 13), 4) to pay a debt before the Lord (v. 14).

Application: The reasons believers today find for gathering together normally do not compare favorably with the motivation of the apostle Paul. Rather than committing the gifts of their lives to the establishment of a church family, today's believer is often merely shopping around for something that suits him. Rather than understanding the importance of encouraging a church's leadership while being encouraged, today's believer often maintains a critical disposition. Rather than looking to bear fruit out of a sense of obligation before his Savior, today's believer is looking for a refreshing experience as though God owed him something more somehow. We need to adopt the motivation of the apostle Paul in our commitment to our local church family.

Notes:

1:10-15 **5. Paul had plans to get to Rome, and these plans were nothing new for him. He desired to see these people like a baby desires his milk, yet years had passed without success (Romans Acts 25:11-12 15:23). Read the passages noted and describe how Paul finally did find success for his desire James 4:13-17 and plans. What lessons do Paul's plans for visiting Rome teach us about living in the will of God?**

Answer: Paul found his way to Rome by appealing to Caesar in response to the mistreatment he had experienced in the prison system of Caesarea. There was no writ of habeas corpus to protect Paul's right to a fair and speedy trial, and he had spent over two years waiting for justice (Acts 24:27). Once finally undertaken, the trip to Rome was not exactly a first-class experience either. After shipwreck, snakebite, and many long months of travel in bonds, Paul finally arrives in Rome under house arrest. This was undoubtedly not the trip he had in mind as he wrote this letter to his friends.

Application: James states the lesson of all this best, "If the Lord wills, we shall live, and do this or that" (4:15). Paul knew this truth as he wrote the Roman believers (1:10). It is the business of the believer in the will of God to combine immovable purposes with flexible plans. We understand from these passages that planning is an appropriate activity, but we also understand from Paul's plans that not even the great apostle of the Gentiles endowed with the spirit of prophecy could say for sure when and how he was to arrive at Rome as he longed to do. As we plan to do a thing, we must be willing to do anything in the will of God.

Notes: There is some question as to whether or not Paul's trip to Jerusalem was based on a poor decision. Paul definitively lets the Romans know that his desire to see them had been "hindered" in the past (v. 13); he knew what it was to be forbidden by the Holy Ghost to go to Asia (Acts 16:6); and Paul had received prophetic warnings about the Jerusalem trip too (Acts 21:8-14). But evidently, the Jerusalem warning did not rise to the level of a ban the way the Asian direction had.

My view is that there may have been times during the long days in the jail of Felix in which Paul might have reflected on what life would have been like had he not made the trip to Jerusalem. His unceasing prayers for Rome no doubt continued there. His zeal for Spain had to be put on hold for a time. It may be significant that the straw that broke the back of the Jews who hated Paul was his reflection on the fact he had been called to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21-22). Perhaps there is here an admission that he should have stayed with them. Whatever the case, the results of the trip were not what Paul had expected, and he may have felt responsible for the negative results of his decision. Yet in spite of all this, God used Paul in Jerusalem, and He desired that His servant remain confident in God's will for his future (Acts 23:11).

Interesting Insight!

“Barbarian” (1:14) was the Greek word for anyone who did not speak Greek. An example of onomatopoeia (a word which sounds like its definition), “Barbarian” carried a provincial connotation of inferiority in contrast to the cultured and educated “Hellenist.” Paul clearly sees his obligation to both kinds of people, not merely one or the other.

This important ministry philosophy is best described by the pastor’s pen of John Calvin, “Two things are to be here considered—that the gospel is by a heavenly mandate destined and offered to the wise, in order that the Lord may subject to himself all the wisdom of this world, and make all variety of talents, and every kind of science, and the loftiness of all arts, to give way to the simplicity of his doctrine; and what is more, they are to be reduced to the same rank with the unlearned, and to be made so meek, as to be able to bear those to be their fellow-disciples under their master, Christ, whom they would not have deigned before to take as their scholars; and then, that the unlearned are by no means to be driven away from this school, nor are they to flee away from it through groundless fear. . . .All teachers have also a rule here which they are to follow, and that is, modestly and kindly to accommodate themselves to the capacities of the ignorant and unlearned.” [John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (1539), trans. and ed. John Owen (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849); reprint, vol. 19 of *Calvin’s Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1998) 60-61.]

Paul’s Gospel, the Message of His Ministry

1:2-6 **6. The theme of the book of Romans is the gospel message. These verses describe four**
1:16-17 **critical emphases related to the gospel, which we find throughout the book of Romans. Let’s**
 outline what these introductory verses say about the gospel by completing the chart below:

Answer:

<u>Verse:</u>	<u>Gospel emphasis:</u>
v. 2	The gospel was promised by: Holy Scripture
v. 3-6	The gospel concerns itself with: Christ
v. 16	The gospel is: Power of God unto salvation
v. 17	The gospel reveals: The righteousness of God

Application: Paul emphasizes these four important truths in introducing the theme of his letter. He will spend the rest of the epistle focused on these important topics.

First, the Old Testament promised the gospel Paul preached. It carried the weighty authority of the Word of God.

Tyndale saw in Romans “an introduction unto all the Old Testament” (1534 edition of the New Testament).

“There are more quotations from the Old Testament in this epistle than in all the other epistles together. . . .The quotations are taken from at least fourteen different books of the Old Testament. The two books most frequently quoted are Isaiah and Psalms.” [D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954; Moody Paperback Edition, 1981), vol. 2, *The Pauline Epistles*, 181.]

Christ is the center of the gospel. There is no good news without the Christ of the Bible, preexisting as the second Person of the Trinity—the Son of God, fulfilling the Davidic Covenant according to the flesh—His complete human nature, proven to all to be the appointed one He always had been by the resurrection from the dead (see Acts 17:31), and the one who effectually calls sinners by gifting and commissioning His ministers of the gospel.

The gospel is the power of God, not man, unto salvation. Here lies the difference between it and all other gospels (Galatians 1:6-9). It is from beginning to end a work, which He must accomplish in our behalf. Its requirement is faith, not works; grace, not law; spirit, not flesh; the power of God, not man.

Finally, the gospel is a revelation of the righteousness of God. It shows us the justice of the Justifier as He justifies lives we can see. As its message spreads from faith to faith, changing life after life, men and women who know

nothing of the righteousness of God are confronted with the revelation of it by this good news faithfully proclaimed (Romans 10:14-17).

Notes: There is much discussion among commentators about two statements Paul makes in the verses referenced by this question.

The first statement we find in verse four, where Bible students have asked what is meant by Paul when he says, “And declared to be the Son of God with power.” Some difficulty relates to the need to reconcile the word translated “declared” (KJV; NASB; NIV), which normally means “define,” “appoint,” or “fix,” with the truth that Jesus was by virtue of His nature and essence always the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity. Although translating “declared” seems to clear things up, many object that the Greek word simply cannot be faithfully translated this way. In what sense then was Jesus “appointed” the Son of God at the resurrection? What changed about Christ making Him the Son of God in a way He was not before? For centuries orthodoxy has denounced the error called “adoptionism,” which teaches that Jesus became the Son of God at some point during His lifetime. Beginning with the virgin birth, there was no time at which the man Jesus was not God’s Son. It was not “flesh” that became “the Word”, but rather that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14).

So what does this verse teach? Some understand from it that the function of Christ changed (though not His person) at the resurrection. Accordingly, it is here Jesus begins to be God’s Son “in power” to reign as King (see Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 47-49). Although I disagree with some of these interpreters about what constitutes the millennial reign of Christ, I do believe that understanding Romans 1:4 as a reference to the exaltation of Christ is correct. As our Mediator, the work of Christ involved humiliation and exaltation (Phil. 2:5-9). The resurrection was an appointment to sonship because it was the first and most important step of exaltation. Galatians 4:1-2 explains for us the oriental view of the rights of sonship. When an heir is a child he does not differ from the slaves. He is still the son by nature, but he functions as a slave until the appointment of the father changes that. The resurrection was this appointment for Christ from His Heavenly Father. Jesus had always been the Son of God in humiliation, now He was exalted or appointed as the Son no longer numbered among the slaves. For this reason, the translation “declare,” albeit interpretive, gives a good sense of the meaning of the passage and is followed by the best translations. Before leaving this passage, note the contrast between the phrases “according to the flesh” and “according to the Spirit of holiness.” The first phrase is a reference to the humanity of Christ, and the second is a reference to the deity of Christ. When Paul referred to the divine essence of God, that nature which was possessed by Christ, Paul called it “the Spirit of holiness.” [See Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus, Divine Messiah* (Geanies House, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), p. 380, who follows Warfield, Hodge, Vincent and others.]

The second statement causing a lot of discussion is found in verse 17. What did Paul mean when he wrote “from faith to faith?” Syntactically, the normal approach would be to see the phrase describing the main verb of the sentence, the revelation of the righteousness of God accomplished by the gospel. This is the view I have adopted seeing a parallel with the importance of the preaching of the gospel to the spread of the faith from person to person in Romans 10:14-17. The revelation process, the preaching of the gospel, spreads from the faith of one resulting in the faith of another. At one point, Augustine suggested this interpretation (*The Spirit and the Letter*, 11.18). But it is a view clearly not well represented among today’s commentators. Instead, they see the phrase modifying the righteousness (or justifying activity) of God. How this righteousness is “from faith” is perfectly clear, but the phrase “to faith” is more difficult to explain. Some have seen only an emphatic device pointing to the same convention in 2 Corinthians 2:16 (Moo, 75-78), while others have seen the growth of faith and sanctification here (Calvin, 65). While 2 Corinthians 2:16 helps, it is not clear that “emphasis” is the only thing going on in that passage. In the context, Paul is again speaking of the spread of revelation, the preaching of the gospel (verses 14-15). Each of these interpretations teaches valid Biblical truth.

"The Gospel Minister and the Christians of Rome"

Romans 15:14 - 16:27

Lesson 2

Purpose

With lesson two we continue and complete our introduction to the Epistle of Romans by skipping ahead to the end of the book. Gospel is good news, and behind most "good news" lies the work of good reporters. Your students will learn from the master of gospel reporters what it means to be a minister of the gospel. In addition, the examples of first century Christianity described for us by the lives of the Roman Christians he mentions will encourage us all to do our part. The passage before us presents unique insights into the nature of gospel ministry, and if our day is to ever hear the truth of the good news, we shall need to be the kind of people we read about in this passage.

In A Nutshell

You may be surprised that we are already at the end of the book of Romans in our study! Well, if it seems as though we missed something along the way, you are correct. Lesson 1 introduced us to "The Gospel Ministry and the Theme of Romans." Remember that "gospel" means "good news." With Lesson 2 we recognize that the end of Paul's letter, like its beginning, deals with some subjects which are introductory to the whole. Here we learn about the reporters behind the good news, the apostle Paul and his friends in Rome. If our day is to be impacted by the gospel ministry, we need to be like them.

To The Testimony!

The Ministry of the Gospel Minister

**Romans
15:14-15**

1. People are the focus of the ministry of the gospel minister. In these first two verses of our passage, Paul admits that in order to be faithful to the calling of God's grace upon him as a minister of the gospel he had to write very boldly on some tough issues. He did so confidently because he had been convinced that the Roman believers exhibited three important evidences of spiritual maturity. What are those three characteristics of maturity?

Answer: The three characteristics Paul mentions are found in verse 14. The Roman believers were full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another.

Application: Admonition is an important part of the gospel ministry of making disciples, and admonition can be a negative thing. The Greek word is used about seven times in the New Testament, and these usages show that admonishing is an activity which often involves tears (Acts 20:31), that is can be easily confused with shaming (1 Cor. 4:14) and making enemies (2 Thes. 3:15), and that it is especially appropriate for the undisciplined, just like encouragement is especially appropriate for the fainthearted (1 Thes. 5:14, see notes below). This is the day of itching ears (2 Tim. 4:3), thin skins, and hard hearts. The last thing many today want to hear is the irritation of admonishment. Yet the sign of a mature Christian is the possession of thick skin and a tender heart. The Romans were people to whom Paul could speak very boldly.

They were also people who were qualified to do some admonishing of their own because they possessed “goodness” and “knowledge.” Calvin emphasizes the importance of both of these: “Two qualifications are especially necessary for him who gives admonitions: the first is kindness, which disposes his mind to aid his brethren by his advice, and also tempers his countenance and his words with courtesy,—and the second is skill in advice or prudence, which secures authority to him, inasmuch as he is able to benefit the hearers whom he addresses” (526).

Notes: The other usages for “admonish” [νουθετεω] are Col. 1:28, Col. 3:16, and 1 Thes. 5:12.

Romans 15:16-21 **2. Paul also wrote boldly because God had graciously called him (v. 15). The purpose of this vocational grace was to make Paul a minister of the gospel (v. 16). List some characteristics of Paul’s gospel ministry from verses 16-21.**

Isaiah 52:7-15

Answer: The characteristics of Paul’s ministry include the following: 1) it was public—focused on people (v. 16), 2) it was priestly—a holy work sanctified by the Holy Spirit (v. 16, see “Interesting Insight”), 3) it was not presumptuous—the accomplishments of Christ, not Paul (vv. 17-19), 4) it was faithful proclamation—people heard the gospel for the first time (vv. 20-21).

Application: 1) The Greek word translated “minister” (λειτουργος) is the word from which we get our word “liturgy.” It comes from two roots, the word for “people” (λαϊκος) and the word for “work” (εργον). The calling of Paul was to “people work” in the sense that it involved official public service in the spiritual realm. Gospel ministry is all about publicly impacting people for Christ. In this way, Paul uses the verb form of “minister” in 15:27 to speak of the offering he was raising for the saints in Jerusalem. 2) This word for “minister” is commonly used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament to describe the work of the priests and Levites, and this is the way Paul uses the word here in a metaphorical way. The phrase translated “ministering the gospel of God” actually is the verb form of the word, “priest.” It means “to work as a priest.” Paul uses the metaphor to emphasize that the work of gospel ministry must be a holy work, one that is sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 3) The accomplishments of Paul were the accomplishments of Christ. We should understand our need for the power of the Spirit of Christ for ministry, and our description of the results of ministry ought to be reiterations of the work that God has done. 4) Paul sets an important example for us today because he determined to preach Christ to those who had not yet heard of him. The passage from Isaiah Paul quotes makes clear that the ministry of God’s people in this day and age is to be uniquely focused on letting people hear the gospel for the first time. Whether or not we have been called to build on the foundations of others, we have all been called to build, not simply inhabit what we found when we came. We too need to fully preach the gospel.

Notes: One of the key legacies of the Protestant Reformation enjoyed by the Western world today is the principle of the priesthood of every believer (1 Pet. 2:9). All believers are priests of the gospel of God. Romanism uses the term “priest” as a literal designation of the clergy (Anglicanism uses the term metaphorically). Romans 15:16 is the verse in the New Testament which comes the closest to supporting this mistaken idea. The mistake misses the metaphorical nature of Paul’s language. He is painting a word-picture of Christian ministry with the idea of priesthood. We do not have literal priests today anymore than we literally offer people as sacrifices. All believers are responsible for the priestly ministry of the gospel. See “Interesting Insight.”

Also note that verse 20 is an important allusion to the serpent’s destiny in the garden and one reason we see Satan in the form of the serpent in Genesis 3.

Interesting Insight!

“And the ministry which is His own divine institution, the gift (Eph. 4:11) of the ascended Lord to His Church, is never once designated, as such, by the term which would have marked it as analogous to Levi or to Aaron. Is this passage in any degree an exception? No, for it contains its own full inner evidence of its metaphorical nature. The ‘priest-working’ here refers not to a ritual but to ‘the gospel.’ The ‘oblation’ is the nations. The hallowing element, shed as it were upon the victims, is the Holy Spirit. Not in a material temple, and serving at no tangible altar, the apostle brings his many *converts* as his offering to the Lord. The Spirit, at his preaching and on their believing, descends upon them; and they lay themselves down as ‘a living sacrifice’ where the fire of love shall consume them, to His glory” (Moule, 326).

Romans 16:17-20 **3. Let's skip ahead to notice one last characteristic of Paul's ministry. The Isaiah chapter Paul quotes in Romans 15:21 is also quoted in 2 Corinthians 6:17. What is Paul emphasizing in the Corinthian passage, and how is he practicing that emphasis in Romans 16:17-18?**

Isaiah 52:11

2 Cor. 6:14-18

Answer: Paul's classic statement on the doctrine of separation is 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, and he draws upon the authority of Isaiah 52:11 in making it: "Touch not the unclean thing" (v. 17). He practices this emphasis in Romans 16:17 with the commands "mark them" and "avoid them."

Application: Christian ministry needs to be separated ministry. This truth is included in Paul's picture of ministry as acceptable priesthood, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Separation is no minor point in the ministry of the apostle Paul. It is an emphasis Paul "urged" ("beseech," KJV) upon the believers of Rome. Doctrinally deviant men and ministries were to be publicly marked and avoided. No lack of visibility about who these men were and no confusion about how to treat them ought to characterize the gospel ministry. "I beseech you to mark" carries the force of an imperative, and "avoid" is a grammatical imperative. These are not optional emphases for the students of pastoral theology, they are sacred commands to be obeyed by all of God's people (v. 19). In addition, "to mark" and "avoid" are present tense verbs, which grammatically means that they are constantly necessary directives. We need to keep on marking and keep on avoiding. We need to rekindle separatist convictions lest they become passé. Failure to "mark" and "avoid" is not brotherly love or getting past the misunderstandings of the past; it is treasonous disobedience.

Notes:

The Plans of the Gospel Minister

Romans 15:22-23 **4. This next section of our passage teaches us some important principles about making plans and decisions in the will of God. Paul mentions his desire to do the will of God in 15:32. He also mentions a desire of another kind in verse 23. What is that desire? Where (chapter and verse) did we see that desire in Lesson One? What lesson do verses 22-23 teach us about doing the will of God?**

James 4:13-17

Answer: Paul desired to see the Roman believers in person. We saw this desire expressed in 1:11. See the "From the Honeycomb" exercise in Lesson One.

Application: There are at least three important lessons about doing the will of God in these two short verses. First, doing the will of God for our lives involves submitting our longings and desires to the providential control of the Lord. Paul explains that he had been hindered from fulfilling his longing to see the Roman Church. Although many emphasize today the importance of successful planning, the Scripture emphasizes the importance of the subjection of all plans to God's providential control. We need to long to do his will more than we long to experience the specifics of our plans (James 4:13-17). Second, "For which cause" (v. 22) takes us back to verse 20, in which Paul expressed his sense of calling to preach Christ where He had not been named before. Rome was not that kind of place. The influence of many popular writers on the subject today notwithstanding, doing God's will is not always synonymous with doing whatever it is that we want to do when we want to do it. This is true even when we are living for God the way the apostle Paul did. The duty of God's will can often involve apprehension rather than longing. Finally, doing the will of God for our lives requires patience. Paul tells us that his longing to see Rome had gone unfulfilled for many years, yet he patiently did the will of God in spite of this.

Notes:

Romans
15:24-29

Acts
22:22
23:9-11
24:24-27
25:10-12
27:14-26
28:11-16

5. We learn from 15:25 that Paul wrote this epistle to the Roman Church from Corinth on his third missionary journey just prior to his departure to Jerusalem during the three months mentioned in Acts 20:2-3. We also learn from these verses what Paul planned to have happen between this time and the time he would see the Romans “in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ” (v. 29). The verses listed from Acts help summarized some of what actually did happen. How did Paul’s plans compare to Paul’s eventual experience? Were Paul’s plans accurate? What do your answers to these questions teach us about our plans and doing the will of God?

Answer: Paul’s plans were accurate only in the detail that he would some day see Rome. They were inaccurate in regard to how this was going to happen and when this was going to happen. Paul expected the happy reception of his gift in Jerusalem and the following speedy passage to Spain by way of Rome. Paul experienced instead great opposition and injustice, threats on his life, years of imprisonment, an appeal to Caesar, and even shipwreck before he finally arrived at Rome as originally planned in verse 29. While in Rome Paul was still a prisoner, and we have little indication that he ever made it to Spain.

Application: The apostle Paul made plans, and so should we. However, our plans do not really determine much of anything, and we should not be surprised or discouraged if those things do not go according to our plans. God has a plan. His plan can change, surprise, disappoint, and even frustrate our plans, depending upon how we react to His work in our lives. We need to be willing to submit to His plans for us. This is what the “fullness of the blessings of God” is really all about. It is not the easy road, but it is the road where the Lord promises to be by our side with the words, “Take courage” (Acts 23:11).

Notes: Charles Hodge says regarding Paul and Spain: “Whether Paul ever accomplished his purpose of visiting Spain, is a matter of doubt. There is no historical record of his having done so, either in the New Testament, or in the early ecclesiastical writers; though most of those writers seem to have taken it for granted” [Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1886; reprint, 1994), 412].

Romans
15:24-33

6. Paul makes clear that the Roman Christians were critical to the success of his plans in the will of God as a gospel minister. What did Paul’s plans count on the Roman believers for? What important principle of gospel ministry can you glean from your answer?

Answer: The plans of the apostle Paul as a gospel minister counted on the Roman believers for financial support and prayer support. Paul mentions two kinds of financial support: the support of the gospel minister (“be brought on my way thitherward” v. 24, “I will come by you into Spain” v. 28), and the support of the gospel ministry (the contribution for Jerusalem, v. 26).

Application: Verse 27 mentions an important principle of gospel ministry. Those who have received spiritual benefits ought to be willing to reciprocate with financial benefits. We ought to appreciate those whom God has used to bring us the gospel, and we ought to do so with our checkbook. The word for “minister” in this verse is the verb form of the noun we saw in Paul’s self-designation as a “minister of Jesus Christ” in verse 16. Meeting the financial needs of the ministry is a sacred public duty.

In addition, the words “strive together with me” in verse 30 teach another important ministry principle. The work of gospel ministry is not merely the work of gospel ministers; it must also be the work of the local church as a whole through prayer for the work of those ministers. From the other side of the Mediterranean Sea, the Roman Church could make a difference in Paul’s ministry in Jerusalem through the power of prayer. The word Paul chooses to describe this activity (*sunagonizomai*) is a compound word comprised of the preposition “with” (*sun*) plus the Greek word for an athletic contest or struggle (*agonizomai*). We get the word “agony” from this word. The work of gospel ministry is difficult, not easy.

Notes: Moo believes that the idea of sealing fruit in verse 28 relates to the importance of accountability in the handling of the Lord’s money making the following reference: “A. Deissmann notes papyrus texts that speak of ‘sealing [sacks] of grain’ in order to guarantee the correctness of their contents . . . These texts are close to the idea of ‘sealing fruit.’” (907, fn. 62).

Results of Gospel Ministry

Romans
16:1-16

7. We have already seen in general terms from question one that gospel ministry had produced some mature believers in the Roman Church. Mature and useful Christian people are the blessed result of faithful gospel ministry. Now in chapter 16, Paul goes into some detail concerning the specific characteristics of these special folk. Using the chart below, write each name that appears under the characteristic which best describes their testimony from Paul's description.

Answer:

<u>Testimony Characteristic</u>	<u>Names:</u>
Sacrificial Service:	Phoebe
Endured Danger:	Prisca and Aquilla; Andronicus and Junias
Faithfully Experienced:	Epaenetus; Andronicus and Junias
Hard Work:	Mary; Urbanus; Tryphena and Tryphosa; Persis
Beloved:	Epaenetus; Ampliatus; Stachys
Approved:	Apelles; Rufus

Application: Local churches are not comprised of bricks, mortar, pews, and pulpits. They are comprised of the kind of people Paul cites in this passage. The Roman Church did not have a building in New Testament times, let alone a basilica. The results of gospel ministry should be measured in terms of changed lives, not in terms of building programs. Testimonies of lives that have been truly changed by the gospel will evince the characteristics of Christian maturity we see listed in this passage.

Notes: The importance of the ministry of women in the work of the Lord is a striking feature of Romans 16, especially as it is contrasted with the role of women in Islam. Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, the mother of Rufus, Julia, and the sister of Nereus are all women who receive mention from the apostle Paul as faithful servants of Christ, as do their male counterparts. The case of Phoebe is especially instructive. Evidently, Phoebe was the courier for the epistle of Romans, and as such she receives a special commendation from Paul (16:1-2). He describes her as "a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea." The word for "servant" is the feminine form (the morphology of the masculine and feminine are identical) of "deacon." The verb form was used in Acts 6:2 to describe the work ("serve tables") of the seven men who were chosen to free the apostles to the ministry of the word and prayer. It is the word used for one of the two offices in a local church (Phil. 1:1, 1Tim. 3). Paul's designation for Phoebe as "deacon" raises the question, "Should a local church have women deacons?" I believe the answer to that question depends upon how closely we associate "serving tables" with the office of "deacon" today. As a Baptist minister who has some experience candidating at Baptist churches, I know that the constitutions of many of these churches delineate the qualifications of Sunday School superintendents and teachers, secretaries, treasurers, missions group leaders, and more. Yet a core Baptist distinctive is our belief in two local church offices. We make a distinction between the office of "deacon" and all these other official positions of service delineated in our constitution. These various positions were likely less clearly defined in Paul's day than they are in ours (see Moo, 914). With the exception of the office of the pastors, the other ministries of a local church could be adequately described as the ministries of a "deacon" in the New Testament sense of that word. The word emphasized service, not administration. Some of these servants were women without objection, just as today few churches would object

to women leadership in regard to serving tables or holding other official positions as mentioned above. We see indications of the official capacity of women in ministry in 1 Timothy 3:11, “Even so must their wives be grave.” The KJV translates this verse as though it is a reference to the wives of the deacons mentioned in verse 8. This is an accurate approach to the passage, and it emphasizes an important principle—the ministries of husband and wife are closely connected (see Andronicus and Junia in 16:7 who are both described as “apostles,” although “Junia” may be translated “Junias,” masculine; and even if the word is feminine, the husband-wife relationship must be inferred). An equally accurate approach, however, recognizes that the Greek word for “wife” is also the normal word for “woman.” It reads, “Women must likewise be dignified” (NASB, and Bruce, 270). With this understanding Paul is speaking to Timothy of the qualifications of female deacons having just finished the section on male deacons. I believe the latter of these options is preferable because the passage says nothing about the wives of the bishops or pastors. Why would Paul specify qualification for the wives of deacons but not for the wives of pastors? One of the differences between the office of a pastor and that of a deacon is that women occupied not the first office, but the second.

In summary, the New Testament does indicate that women in ministry were called “deacons.” The high standing and great confidence of official Christian service is available to both males and females (1 Tim. 3:13). Paul assured the Romans that Phoebe was worthy of this standing (Rom. 16:2). This standing may even involve financial support for ministry, as it undoubtedly did for Phoebe (the work of women missionaries, Christian day school teachers, etc.). Today, however, the service orientation of the role of “deacon” has unfortunately given way to the executive concept of an administrative board. In this context, it is critical to pay close attention to the principles of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, the chapter preceding the one which spoke of women as deacons. Here we find the importance of the submissive quality of the ministry of Christian women. Teaching men and exercising official authority over men are strictly prohibited, and the priority of the home of the Christian women is affirmed. If the office of deacon in a local church involves either teaching or officially leading the men of the church, women should not occupy that role.

**Romans
16:21-27**

8. The establishment of mature believers in the obedience of faith is an important result of faithful gospel ministry. Paul closes his epistle with a prayer for the ultimate goal of gospel ministry. What is that goal? What are some less worthy ultimate goals of ministry common today?

Answer: The ultimate goal of Christian ministry is the glorification of God.

Application: Other less worthy ultimate goals might be drawing a crowd, entertainment, winning an election, building a coalition, social service, or even bringing the lost to Christ at any cost. The servant of the Lord needs to settle upon the conviction that nothing is more important than the glorification of God. The ministry of Christ glorified the Father (v. 27), and it is what our ministries must do through the obedience of the faith (v. 26). Hudson Taylor’s motto makes the point well: “God’s work done God’s way for God’s glory shall never lack God’s supply.”

Notes: In verse 22 we find that Paul used an amanuensis, Tertius, whom he allows to give a greeting. To attribute Romans to the authorship of Tertius, however, would be like crediting a word processor for the work of any who may use it. It would be inaccurate to interpret verse 22 with the conclusion that Tertius is the author of Romans. This is an obvious point, but it teaches us something important about God’s work of inspiration. While it is accurate to say that Paul dictated to Tertius, it is not accurate to say that the Holy Spirit dictated to Paul in the same way. If Paul had merely received dictation, he would be no more worthy of the title “author” than Tertius was. The Bible teaches verbal plenary inspiration, but it does not teach dictation inspiration.

Another valuable insight from this passage in regard to the doctrine of the Bible is the principle of progressive revelation. The student of the Old Testament must keep in mind that some things there are “hidden.” Verse 26 is a significant verse in regard to our understanding of the inspiration of the New Testament. Paul begins the verse “But now,” and he then speaks of “the Scriptures of the prophets” revealing that which had not been known before. This is likely an expression of Paul’s view of the New Testament as “Scriptures of the prophets” (see the same view from Peter in 2 Pet. 3:14-16).

Note that Erastus is called “the chamberlain of the city” (“the city treasurer” NASB). Moule makes an insightful remark concerning this man: “Erastus, the man of civic dignity and wide affairs. He has found no discord between holding a great secular office and the life of Christ; but today he is just a brother with brethren, named side by side with the Quartus whose only title is that beautiful one, ‘the brother,’ ‘our fellow in the family of God’” (343).

"No Excuse! Man's Sin and God's Wrath"

Romans 1:18-3:20

Lesson 3

Purpose:

Your students live in a time in which victimization is emphasized over responsibility. Everyone today has an excuse. To understand the gospel, however, men and women need to understand that they are not victims, but rather responsible sinners without excuse before a holy God. This lesson will help them come to that conviction.

In A Nutshell

Now that we have examined the prologue and epilogue of Paul's letter to the Romans, we come in lesson 3 to the specifics of the gospel doctrine that changed the lives of some who changed the world. The good news begins with the bad news of man's need for the gospel. This is the focus of Romans 1:18-3:20. Before anyone can experience the power of God unto salvation (1:16), he must come to understand the inexcusability of man unto condemnation. In this emphasis, Paul agrees with the message of Christ Himself who counseled that the publican, not the Pharisee, went down to his house justified (Luke 18:9-14).

Answers and Applications:

The Pagan is Without Excuse – Unrighteousness In Spite of God's Creation

- Romans 1:18-23
2:1-5 & 2:17-24
1. Have you ever wondered where to begin when it comes to presenting the good news of the gospel? Today we hear much about God's love for the sinner in His provision of salvation. This is an important theme and one that receives brief treatment in Romans (5:8, 8:35-39), but Paul does not begin his inspired treatment of the gospel in here with the words, "Jesus loves you and has a great plan for your life!" Instead, he begins with the truth that God is very angry over the sin of the sinner. Paul identifies two categories of sinners in the three passages listed (one in chapter one, and one in chapter two). Name the categories; list some differences between them; and then list some similarities between them.

Answer:

Passages:	1:18-23	2:1-5 & 2:17-24
Name:	pagan sinners	non pagan sinners
Differences:	1) God's wrath is revealed actively against them (1:18) 2) rejection of God's general revelation – creation (1:18-20) 3) thankless (1:21); atheistic (1:21-22); naturalistic (1:23)	1) God's wrath is delayed (2:4-5) 2) rejection of God's special revelation – the law (2:17-18, 23) 3) judgmental (2:1); theistic or religious (2:19-20); hypocritical (2:21-24)
Similarities:	both under the burning wrath of God (1:18; 2:5) both without excuse due to their knowledge of God (1:20; 2:1) both do the same things (2:3)	

Application: Name: "Pagan" and "non-pagan" are terms well-defined by these passages. A pagan is one who has had no exposure to God's special revelation. Instead, he has known only the general revelation of God's creation. America is quickly becoming a pagan nation, because America has rejected exposure to the special revelation of God. Those of us who have grown up in Bible-believing churches are best described as "non-pagans." But in spite of the advantages of the non-pagan over the pagan, both categories are completely without excuse before the

wrath of God. They are without excuse in view of their knowledge of God and in view of their violation of God's will. We need to see ourselves on the common ground of condemnation as sinners, whether pagan or not.

Notes: Some translation details help provide a clearer understanding of some of the verses under consideration in this question. First in 1:18, when Paul says that pagans "hold the truth," a better understanding is the idea that they "hold down the truth" or "suppress the truth" (κατεχῶ). The phrase in verse 19, "manifest in them," could also be translated, "manifest to them" (see BAGD, *ev*, IV.4.a). Finally, "between themselves" in 1:24 could also be translated "by them" with reference to the role of the vain "imagination" of verse 21 in the dishonoring of their bodies. The phrase is *ev* αυτοῖς in verse 24, not *ev* ἑαυτοῖς as in verse 27.

The effectuality of general revelation vs. special revelation is an important issue for a correct understanding of the gospel. General revelation through creation is sufficient to render the pagan sinner without excuse, for the revelation from God's creation contains irrefutable pointers to God's eternal power and divine nature (1:20; 10:16-18; Acts 17:26-28); the text says plainly that they knew Him (1:21). The proper response to this knowledge is the glorification of God and thanksgiving. General revelation is enough to require these responses. Whether it is enough to provide the object of saving faith, however, is less obvious. Indeed, without saving faith, men and women reject the knowledge they have through creation, dishonor God, and remain unthankful (1:21). But can someone come to Christ through nature's revelation? Romans 10:14-18 seems to be the determinative passage for this question. The passage makes clear that faith comes from hearing the word of God, special revelation from the mouth of a preacher. But then in verse 18, Paul quotes from Psalm 19:4 to support the conclusion that there is a sense in which the ends of the world have already heard, God's general revelation through His work of creation. I believe that a distinction must be made between the hearing of verse 17 and the hearing of verse 18. Any understanding of verse 18 must assume the truth that Paul presented in verses 14-17, namely that none can hear the faith-producing word of Christ without a preacher, i.e., special revelation. So when Paul says in verse 18 that some have heard, he does not mean to say that they have heard the faith-producing word of Christ. Instead, he means to say that they have heard in a different sense. They have heard the message of creation, which is something less than faith producing unto salvation. As the organization of Psalm 19 clearly indicates, general revelation lays the groundwork for faith producing special revelation, but it cannot be a replacement of it. Only in verses 7-14 can the psalmist speak of the restoring of the soul.

Romans 1:21-27 **2. The moral bankruptcy described by 1:29-30 is the final result of paganism. Societies that are reduced to paganism go bankrupt through a series of transactions, which Paul describes in 1:21-27. He says specifically that men "change" (better "exchange") one thing for another. List the transactions of paganism that bring about social destruction by completing the following chart.**

Answer:

Passage:	What they gave away:	What they obtained:	Why they did it:
1:21-23	the glory of the incorruptible God (theism)	an image of corruptible man and animals (idolatry; atheism)	speculation over revelation (v. 21); pride (v.22)
1:24-25	the truth of God; worship of the Creator (creation)	a lie; worship of the creature (evolution)	God gives them over to the desires of their hearts (v. 24)
1:26-28	the natural function of the sexes (bisexual marriage)	homosexuality; the appropriate penalty for sin	God gives them over to their passions (v. 26); a distaste for God (v. 28)

Application: Three exchanges bring a society to the destruction of paganism: theism for idolatry, creation for evolution, and bisexual marriage for homosexuality. All are related in that all are a rejection of God's revelation in nature (1:20). Science that advocates atheism, evolution, and homosexuality is pseudo-science. Each is a foolish corruption of God's revelation in creation, and each is based upon man's heart desires rather than good research.

Note also that Paul boldly asserts that there is no such thing as an honest agnostic (1:21). He says plainly, "they knew God." At the base of these exchanges is a rejection of what man knows, a rejection of God's revelation. This rejection involves imaginative speculations, a darkened heart (v. 21), and a prideful profession of wisdom (v. 22). It also involves God's handing them over to the lusts of their own heart. Man is bent on his own destruction. In addition, prosperity and the opportunity it brings can be God's curse upon a society, for in this environment the lusts of the hearts of men are allowed to destroy that society uninhibited. Spiritual revival of societies often involves the loss of material prosperity. Reprobation of societies most often involves prosperous times.

The exchange of theism for idolatry is an exchange of the incorruptible and glorious for the corruptible and mundane. It is an exchange of what cannot be seen for what can. It is an exchange of the future for the now. It is an exchange of what lasts for that which does not. The passage makes clear that the idolatry of the pagan in no way substitutes for or prepares him for any kind of successful quest for God. On this point Moo comments, “In that this ‘becoming foolish’ involves the various idolatrous religions that people invent for themselves (v. 23), Paul’s estimation of non-Christian religions also becomes clear in this verse. Far from being a preparatory state in the human quest for God, these religions represent a descent from the truth and are evidence of man’s deepest corruption” (108).

The exchange of creation for evolution is the exchange of the truth of God for a lie. It is not the exchange of “Creator” for “natural selection,” as described by Paul, but the exchange of “Creator” for “creatures.” Even when men deny the Creator, they are still left with nothing but creatures (created things), and so they have failed to rid themselves of the reality of the Creator altogether. Consequently, the exchange of Creator for evolution must involve blind faith, a rejection the principles of good science.

The passage teaches four important principles about homosexuality. First, homosexuality is evidence of God’s judgment upon a pagan society, not merely an alternative lifestyle (v. 26). Where homosexuality proliferates, destruction is imminent. Second, homosexuality is a violation of God’s design in nature, never a natural response to one’s true makeup (v. 26). Homosexuals are homosexuals by virtue of choice, not birth. Understood in terms of what is natural, there is no such thing as a human homosexual. Every human without natural defect is bisexual, even though some bisexual humans commit homosexuality. Third, homosexuality begins with a rejection of the proper role of women by women. Contrast “their women” in v. 26 with “the men” of v. 27. Paul views women as belonging to the men, and it is this natural role that the women reject. It is no coincidence that the cause of women’s liberation from God’s design for the family has preceded our society’s embrace of homosexuality. When the women of society no longer desire to be viewed as “their women” or “the women of the men,” families are destroyed, and homosexuality is an ultimate result. Finally, homosexuality is physically and emotionally destructive (v. 27). See video entitled, *It’s Not Gay*.

Notes:

Romans 1:28-32 **3. In verse 32 of this passage, we again read that the pagan knows the ordinance of God. What specific ordinance does he know, and how does he react to what he knows?**

Answer: The pagan understands that God has ordained that the sinner must die. In the face of the prospects of death, the sinner continues to sin. In addition, he “takes pleasure” in those who sin. The word here is translated “consented” in Acts 8:1, where Saul of Tarsus is assisting in the stoning of Stephen. Paganism does not merely take pleasure when men and women commit these sins, but also paganism actively supports the commission of these sins. Consequently, the culture of paganism is a culture of death.

Application: Death is the inviolable law of God that confronts the sin of paganism. Not even the unbelieving pagan, who has rejected the revelation of God, can reject the knowledge of this unavoidable reality. Yet it is in the face of this knowledge, the fact of looming death, that the pagan continues to sin. We are told that he not only does the same, but also influences others to do the same. The practice of paganism is aggressively solicitous. Paganism propagates itself with propaganda designed to ameliorate the sting of death. One goal of paganism is to convince men that death is not all that bad (abortion, human sacrifice, suicide, euthanasia, etc.).

Notes:

The Non-Pagan is Without Excuse – Unrighteousness In Spite of God's Law

Romans 2:4-11 3:1-8	4. With chapter 2 and most of chapter 3, the apostle Paul makes his case for the inexcusability of the non-pagan sinner. He uses the same “without excuse” word to describe them (2:1), which he used to describe the pagan (1:20). He is now talking about the theist not the atheist, the creationist not the evolutionist, and the moral family man not the homosexual pervert, but he is still talking about inexcusable sinners. Paul supports this condemnation of the religious sinner with three basic truths: 1) God’s nature - what God is like, 2) the religious sinner’s nature - what the religious sinner is like, and 3) the saved pagan’s nature – what the Christian Gentile is like. With this question, we will look at the aspects of the nature of God that leave the religious sinner without excuse. Examine the verses listed and list as many of these attributes of God’s nature as you can find.
Luke 18:9-14	

Answer: The primary reason religious sinners fail to see the condemnable guilt of their true condition is that they have failed to see the true condition of the nature of God. The attributes of God mentioned in these passages include 1) the riches of His kindness, 2) tolerance, 3) patience (2:4), 4) wrath (2:5), 5) impartial justice (2:5-11), 6) faithfulness (3:3), 7) true (3:4), and 8) righteous (3:5).

Application: Note that Paul mentions on the one hand the riches of God’s kindness, tolerance, patience, as well as His faithfulness, all designed to lead men to repentance, and on the other God’s wrath, impartial justice, truth, and righteousness, all designed to bring men to judgment. These two distinct categories of the attributes of God’s nature seem to be opposites, but because God is a perfect being, there is no inconsistency or contradiction in Him. What appears to us to be two kinds of nature is really a unified whole in holy God. The strictness of God’s holiness does not contradict the infinitude of His love. God’s nature teaches us that true infinite love is holy in the strictest way imaginable. Today, God’s love and holiness are viewed as competing entities in many circles. In reality, the view of love that competes against the strictness of God’s holiness is not God’s love at all. It is pseudo-love.

The burning wrath of God against the sinner, pagan and non-pagan, is a reality of our New Testament age and world. The Old Testament contains some twenty or more synonyms for the wrath of God, and none claim that they fail to find this awful truth there [see Jer “burning anger” (12:13), “indignation” (10:10), “hot-wrath” (6:11), “vexation” (8:19), “fury” (7:29), “wrath” (21:5), “roaring” (25:30), “kindling” (21:14), “weariness” (20:9), “hate” (12:8), “loathing” (14:19), “rejection” (6:3), and “spurning” (14:21)]. Some assert, however, that unlike the days of the Old Testament, we now live in an age of grace during which the wrath of God no longer applies. David Wells makes the point, “Christians in Our Time sometimes act as though they were the first to recognize that God is a God of love. Of course the Bible tells us that God is love, but the Christians of modernity seem to think that this constitutes an adequate theology in itself, that God is fundamentally if not exclusively love – and hence that talk of divine holiness is distracting or intrusive. Protestant liberalism pioneered this displacement of God’s holiness in the nineteenth century, but in this century evangelicals have taken up with distressing carelessness the wholesale reordering of the Christian faith that it introduced, from the meaning of the atonement to the meaning of Christian sanctification” [*God in the Wasteland; The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 135-136].

The difference between the Pharisee and the publican of Luke 18 is the difference between a sinner who recognizes the immediacy of the wrath of God and one who does not. The prayer on the lips of the publican in that passage, “God, be merciful to me a sinner,” employs a rare and important theological word we find later in Romans (3:25). The prayer reads literally, “God, be propitiated for me the sinner.” Propitiation is the work of Christ by which the wrath of God against sinful man is satisfied. As David Wells points out so insightfully, many non-pagans in our time have failed to see themselves before the wrath of God the way the publican of Luke 18 did. In our presentation of the gospel to these times, we need a return to the theology of the Great Awakening, which made no apologies or denials in regard to the burning wrath of God. Jonathan Edward’s sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” said in part the following: “There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God. . . . They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell. And the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not then very angry with them, as he is with many miserable creatures now tormented in hell, who there feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth: yea, doubtless, with many that are now in this congregation, who it may be are at ease, than he is with many of those who are now in the flames of hell. So that it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he does not let loose his hand and cut them off. God is not altogether such an one as themselves, though they man imagine him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber, the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to

receive them, the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them.” We need to be willing to say the same. As we affirm the kindness of the Lord in verse 4, let us never deny the wrath of the Lord in verse 5.

Notes:

From The Honeycomb

“no respect of persons with God
Romans 2:11

The word group translated “respect of persons” comes originally from a Hebrew idiom meaning “to receive the face.” The lexicon tells us that the Greek word has only been found among Christian writers (BAGD). It is used only in the verses listed below. The word means “to favor someone for illegitimate reasons.” Look up the passages below, and list these “illegitimate reasons” men are often favored over others:

Acts 10:34 – God is without partiality in regard to Jew or Gentile (Peter’s message to Cornelius).
Eph. 6:9 & Col. 3:25 – God is without partiality in regard to employer or employee.
Jms. 2:1 & 2:9 – Believers ought not show partiality in regard to the rich or the poor.

Answer: The word means favoring someone because of that person’s social standing. The two factors that create this illegitimate sense of social standing according to these verses are ethnicity (or possibly religious heritage) and wealth. Salvation is not based upon these distinctions.

Application: Ethnicity/religious heritage and wealth are the two most important factors in the world’s assessment of the adequacy of a religion. Men naturally ask, “Has the organization been around the longest, and do they have the most?” God’s criterion is obedience to truth.

Notes: The truth of verses 6-10 can be difficult to reconcile with Paul’s larger treatment of justification by faith alone, not of works (Rom 3:28). The theme of “no partiality” is clear enough, but the passage seems to teach justification by works when it says definitively that everyman will one day be judged on the basis of whether he has done good or disobeyed God. I believe that four considerations help reconcile the passage with justification by faith alone and clarify the meaning of Paul here.

First, remember that the passage follows verses four and five, which make clear that repentance and heart condition determine whether or not a man is under the wrath of God. Those who repent are described by verses 7 and 10, and those who fail to repent by verses 8-9.

Second, the phrase in verse 7 translated “patient continuance in well doing” [“perseverance in doing good”, NASB] is literally, “patience of a good work.” One way of understanding this genitive relationship is to see what is called a subjective genitive, meaning that the phrase is telling us who or what shows “patience.” Understood this way, we are told by the phrase that good works show patience, much in the same way that the phrase “patience of Job” teaches us that Job showed patience (Jam 5:11). The emphasis here is not on the doing of the good works, but rather on the heart condition (remember v. 5) that the good work demonstrates.

Third, the phrase “do not obey the truth” (v. 8) could be interpreted as “do not believe the truth.” BAGD explains regarding *ἀπειθω*, “since, in the view of the early Christians, the supreme disobedience was a refusal to believe their gospel, *α*. may be restricted in some passages to the mng. disbelieve, be an unbeliever. This sense, though greatly disputed (it is not found outside our lit.) seems most probable in J 3:36; Ac 14:2; 19:9; Ro 15:31, and only slightly less prob. in Ro 2:8, 1 Pt 2:8; 3:1, perh. also vs. 20; 4:17.”

Fourth, the next phrase in verse 8, “but obey unrighteousness,” could be translated as “but are persuaded by unrighteousness.” See BAGD, *πειθω*, 3.a and Acts 28:24, where this same word is translated “some *believed*” standing in opposition to those who “believed not” (*πιστευσω*). Verse 8 more clearly then reads, “but on the other hand, to the ones who both out of selfish ambition are disbelieving the truth, and who are being persuaded by unrighteousness, wrath and anger.”

These considerations show that the apparent contradiction between this passage and Paul’s larger justification theme is simply not factually sustainable.

**Romans
2:1-5, 17-24**

5. We have seen the importance of the nature of God when it comes to convincing the religious sinner that he is condemnable. Paul also highlights some of the practices of religious sinners in chapter two. Read the verses listed, and summarize the practices you read about with a single word.

Answer: Hypocrisy.

Application: Expressions of the religious sinner's hypocrisy include: 1) judgment of others while equally guilty (2:1-3, 21-23; see note); 2) emphasis on a specific label (2:17); 3) a teaching rather than teachable spirit (17-20); 4) a negative impact on the lost around them (2:24). Religious people who are not saved display a hypocrisy that proves their condition to be condemnable.

Notes: "Judge not that ye be not judged" (Mt. 7:1) is an admonition more often on the lips of sinners than saints. Those who have not picked up a Bible with interest in their entire lives can recite with great elucidation the symbolism of the speck and the beam of Matthew 7. We need to be clear in our interpretation of both Matthew 7 and Romans 2 that God does not condemn the act of judging. In fact, Paul's point is not that less judging should be going on, but rather that more shall go on, i.e. those who believe that they have escaped the judgment of God actually will not (Rom 2:3). What Christ forbade in Mt. 7 and what Paul exposes in Rom 2 is the hypocrisy of judging while guilty of the very same things we are passing judgment upon others for. In so doing, the religious sinner hopes to make himself less guilty. Paul's point is not that those who are being judged are less guilty, what he is saying is that those doing the judging are no less guilty. God's judgment applies to them too, and Paul is a faithful messenger of this truth as he passes judgment on these people in Romans 2.

**Romans
2:12-16,
25-29**

6. In order to complete his proof of the condemnable guilt of the religious sinner, Paul draws another comparison. This time he is comparing the religious sinner with the nonreligious person who has trusted Christ as his Savior. The comparison involves a similarity (v. 12), a difference (vv. 13-14, 25-27), and the cause of the difference (vv. 15-16, 28-29). Identify the similarity, the difference, and the cause of the difference.

Answer: The similarity between the religious sinner and the Gentile who has been saved is the common seriousness of their sin. Possession of the law, or a lack of the law, could do nothing to mitigate the problem both groups face (2:12). The difference between these two groups is the fact that saved pagans do the Law by nature, whereas the unsaved religious man only hears the law—he cannot do it (2:13-14, 25-27). The cause of the difference is the condition of the heart, conscience, thoughts, and "hidden part" (2:15-16, 28-29) [see note].

Application: The Bible teaches that it is possible to know that we are saved, but the key to this assurance is not what we hear or have heard, but rather what we do and have done. The question is not what are our circumstances on the outside, but rather what is the condition of our heart. Verse 15 teaches that this change will not involve sinless perfection, but it will involve a conscience that persistently accuses the believer of sin in the life if such sin exists. The focus of the saved man is not the praise of men, but rather the praise of God (2:16, 29). They are not as much concerned with what people may or may not know, but rather with what God already knows.

Notes: I recognize that my interpretation of this passage, which sees believing Gentiles described rather than the natural ability of pagans to do good things, is the minority position (Augustine and Cranfield also held this view; for the opposing and more popular "natural law" view see Moo, 148-152). The reasons for seeing believing Gentiles here stem primarily from 1) the emphasis on the heart condition maintained throughout the passage (2:5, 7, 8, 14-15, 28-29), 2) the emphasis of the condemned state of the unbelieving Gentile already discussed in chapter one (the difference between 1:18-32 and 2:14-15, 24-27 is simply too great for both to be describing the same group), and 3) the allusions in the passage to new covenantal language (2:25, "your circumcision has become uncircumcision," Deu 30:6; 2:29, "by the Spirit, not by the letter," Eze 36:27).

The phrase translated "the secrets of men" in verse 16 [KJV, NASB] is τα κρυπτα, which comes from the Greek verb meaning "to hide." The word is used in an adjectival phrase as an object of a preposition in verse 29, "one inwardly," literally, "one in the hidden part," and it is this sense that is best understood in verse 16 as well. Paul is not saying that God will someday judge the hidden things (secrets) of men, but rather that God will someday judge the hidden parts (heart, conscience, thoughts) of men. This is the best understanding given the context. Also, the phrase "on the day" [NASB] and "in the day" [KJV] should be taken in the sense of "in preparation for

the day” [see 2:5 and a usage in Tobit 4:9, where the KJV translation of this apocryphal book translated the word “against” in the phrase, “So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity.”]

**Romans
3:9-20**

7. Romans 3:9-20 is the central passage on the Bible doctrine of sin. The key to this doctrine is the “original sin” view of the condition of man. This truth states that men and women are born sinners (Psa 51:5). Around the turn of the century, Colonel Francis Wayland Parker earned the title, “The father of the progressive educational movement,” by denying the doctrine of original sin. Parker believed, “There never was a lazy child born in God’s busy world” and “There never was such a thing as a selfish child born” [“The Child,” *N.E.A. Journal* (1889): 479-482]. What from this central passage specifically supports the doctrine of original sin?

Answer: The key to the doctrine of original sin is the truth that we are born into the world as sinners. Romans 3:9-18 does not explicitly state this truth the way Psalm 51:5 does, but two teachings of the passage make “original sin” the only way to take the teaching here as well. First, Paul emphasizes the universality of sin (9-12, “all” 2 times, “none” 4 times, “not even one” 2 times, and “together”). There are no exceptions to the truth that all are sinners. Second, the passage clearly states, “the way of peace they have not known” (3:17). Paul does not say that they once knew the way of peace and somehow strayed from their original righteousness. He says they never knew the way of peace.

Application: The Bible doctrine of sin requires that we reject today’s emphasis on the importance of self esteem (Eph. 5:28-29). The saving gospel begins with the exact opposite of self esteem. The Pharisee of Luke 18 had plenty of self esteem, but the publican of that passage went down to his house justified. In the same passage quoted above, Parker said, “The child is a born savage, but he rapidly ascends step by step, by love and works of love, up through all the rays of blessed sunshine! up and up, to eternal light, and the everlasting truth, and the eternal God.” We need to beware that our society today has largely adopted this premise, and we need to reject a weak view of the disgusting character of the sin of man wherever it may be found. One example of this problem in an author who would certainly affirm the doctrine of original sin is John Piper’s enumeration of three things that “stand in the way of our complete satisfaction in this world”: 1) “that nothing has a personal worth great enough to meet the deepest longings of our hearts”; 2) “that we lack the strength to savor the best treasures to their maximum worth”; and 3) “that our joys here come to an end” [*The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God’s Delight in Being God* (Portland: Multnomah, 1991), 29]. “The deepest longings of our hearts” as defined here by Piper are not the deepest longings as described by the apostle Paul in Romans 3. Later in the book, Piper describes “the opposite of righteousness” as setting “our highest affections on things of little or no worth, with all the unjust actions that follows” (39). Paul would disallow the idea that any of our affections are “high” in this sense.

Notes: In addition to original sin, a second important issue discussed among the ranks of historic evangelical orthodoxy in regard to the doctrine of sin is the idea of holistic depravity. This conviction, originally articulated by Augustine and canonized by Luther’s response to Erasmus in *The Bondage of the Will*, states that the sinful condition of mankind renders it impossible for a sinner to believe the gospel without a prior change in nature normally believed to be regeneration. That no man can believe apart from the grace of God, every evangelical believes. The particularistic tradition within evangelicalism, however, sees the grace offered to the elect as different in kind from the grace offered to the non-elect. This grace is necessary to give men the ability to believe, specifically to regenerate them that they might believe. This grace is absolutely effectual. Regeneration in this doctrine always produces faith.

Luther argued specifically that any ability on man’s part must be holistic ability, i.e. if a man has the ability to believe, then he also has the ability to work for his salvation. Against Luther’s approach stands the dichotomy in Scripture between faith and works, however. It is clear from Romans 3 that sin has rendered man unable to work for his justification (Rom 3:20). This is clearly Paul’s emphasis. Had Paul desired to teach that man was unable to believe for his justification in the same sense he is unable to work for his salvation, he undoubtedly would have clearly said so. Rather than tying faith and works together in this way, Paul makes the point later on that because man cannot work, he must believe (3:28). He also asserts that the law of faith excludes boasting (3:27), whereas the particularistic teaching of holistic depravity indicates that the law of faith is not quite enough to exclude the boasting. While this is by no means an exhaustive study of the issue of holistic depravity and the merits of interpreting faith as a direct gift of God, what is clear from this passage is Paul’s emphasis on an inability to work, and the purpose of his emphasis, to stress the need to believe. He is not stressing an inability to believe.

Real Life?

Frederick W. Faber (1814-1863) began his ministry in the Anglican Church upon his graduation from Oxford and in agreement with his Calvinist protestant heritage. These were the days of the Tractarian Movement, however, which convinced many Oxford graduates of Faber's generation to apostatize into reunification with Roman Catholicism. Three years after entering the ministry, the Anglican priest converted and became Father Wilfrid [Kenneth W. Osbeck, *101 Hymn Stories* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1982), 72].

Faber wrote many hymns and poems during his lifetime, a handful of which remain dear to Protestants today.

Perhaps the most famous of these is the hymn, "Faith of Our Fathers." Yet because Faber was a Roman Catholic priest, protestant hymnals have often deleted some of the stanzas of Faber's work for their editions of his hymns. For example, the original text of "Faith of Our Fathers" included the following stanza, which is not typically found in protestant hymnals:

Faith of our fathers! Mary's prayers
Shall win our country back to thee;
And through the truth that comes from God,
England shall then indeed be free.
Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We would be true to Thee till death [Osbeck, 73].

Another well-known Faber hymn is "There's a Wideness In God's Mercy." Originally a thirteen stanza poem entitled "Come To Jesus," protestant hymnals have until very recently employed stanzas 4, 6, 8 and 12. More recently, the following stanza has also been included:

But we make His love too narrow with false limits of our own;
And we magnify His strictness with a zeal he will not own.

Remember question 4 of this lesson, and comment on whether you believe this change is a good adjustment in agreement with the truth of Romans 2, or whether it is a poor adjustment at odds in some way with the chapter.

Answer: It seems to me that the recent addition is a poor one. To assert that it is possible for the sinners of Romans 1:18-3:20 to magnify God's strictness with more zeal than God Himself can stomach is a failure to understand not only the nature of us sinners, but more importantly the nature of God. His strictness against sin is in no way at odds with His love, and it is far too large and zealous to be overblown by sinful man. Rather, the sinner creates this false dichotomy to remake God in his own image, because the very real wrath of God against the sinner is not a topic he finds himself attracted to. [See Graham and Schuller's use of the song "There is a Wideness In God's Mercy" in Rolland McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled: The Failed Strategy of Modern Evangelicalism* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador, 2004), 77-78; see Matt. 7:13-14]

"Justification By Faith, Not Works "

Romans 3:21-4:25

Lesson 4

Purpose:

Your students will come to understand the meaning of God's plan for our salvation as never before. Two emphases of Paul that summarize God's justifying plan are 1) the centrality of the work of Christ, and 2) the need for faith not works. Both those who know the Lord and those who do not will come away with a far greater appreciation of what the Bible says God has graciously done for sinners in Jesus Christ.

In A Nutshell

Martin Luther, in a marginal note in his German translation of the Bible, said of Romans 3:21-26 that it is "the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle, and of the whole Bible." According to this great Reformer and Bible student, to understand these six verses is to understand the whole of Romans, even the whole of Scripture itself. He gets that idea, no doubt, from the apostle Paul himself. Paul's concern in 3:21 – 4:25 is to show that God's plan of salvation (the righteousness of God) preached in Paul's gospel (1:16-17) is the center of the Bible, a center witnessed to by the law (Abraham) and the prophets (David) (3:21, ch. 4). Remember, however, that this is a passage for desperate sinners. Those ready to understand this good news are those whose mouths have been stopped by the doctrine of sin 1:18-3:20 (3:19). If you do not see yourself "without excuse" before God (1:20, 2:1), you are not ready to read on. If you do, nothing will thrill your soul like the content of this passage. Handley C. G. Moule puts it well:

Interesting Insight!

"This is the voice from heaven, audible when the sinner's mouth is shut, while his ears are opened by the touch of God. Without that spiritual introduction to them, very likely they will seem either just a fact in the history of religious thought, interesting in the study of development; or a series of assertions corresponding to unreal needs, and in themselves full of disputable points. Read them when convicted of sin; in other words, bring to them your whole being, stirred from above to its moral depths, and you will not be indifferent to them or oppose them. As the key meets the lock they will meet your exceeding need. Every sentence, every link of reasoning, every affirmation of fact will be precious to you beyond all words. And you will never fully understand them except in such hours, or in the life which has such hours among its indelible memories" [H. G. C. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans* (1958; reprint, Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2001), 84-85].

Answers and Applications:

The Work of Christ and Salvation by Faith Alone

Romans
3:21-26

1. The passage under consideration in this lesson is all about the difference between faith and works. What we mean when we say that sinners are saved by faith alone is that the sinner's work has nothing to do with the sinner's salvation. But there is also an important sense in which our salvation has everything to do with works—the work of Christ. Paul mentions three huge themes regarding the work of Christ for our salvation: justification, redemption, and propitiation. Define these major doctrines by completing the chart below. To complete the chart, fill in the boxes with the best phrase from the scrambled answer list below the chart.

Answer:

Theme:	Sinner's Role	God's Role	Action Involved	Result
Justification	guilty criminal	just judge	declare legally guiltless	legal innocence
Redemption	slave to sin	the rightful master	liberation through the payment of a price	freedom from bondage to sin; service of the rightful master
Propitiation	object of God's wrath	a response to sin involving holy wrath	satisfaction and conciliation of God's wrath	peace with God; object of His unfailing love

Application: Every sinner saved by grace understands that the gospel begins with a look in the mirror that shows us to be guilty criminals in God's courtroom, helpless slaves trapped by the cruel taskmaster of our own sin, and objects of the wrath of a holy God who cannot take sin lightly. In like manner, every sinner saved by grace ought to understand the wonderful blessing of His salvation in these terms. He is legally innocent in the courtroom of God with all the demands of the law completely met; there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Next, he is free from sin's bondage and now in the employ of a new Master who purchased him with His own blood. The saved sinner no longer has to obey his sin nature and sin. He can know the ever increasing victory of spiritual growth and fruitfulness in the Holy Spirit. Finally, sinner saved by grace is now the object of God's love as Christ was. We are accepted in the Beloved (Eph 1:6, note the KJV does not capitalize "Beloved," but it is singular and correctly capitalized by the NASB), to the same degree that we were previously the objects of God's wrath.

Jesus Christ understood our condition like no mere man can, and he willingly took that condition upon Himself shedding His blood under the wrath of God for our justification, redemption, and God's propitiation. Because Jesus Christ is God, and because He became man to die for us, God could be both just and justifier of those who have faith in Jesus (v. 26). This is the answer to Anselm's question in *Cur Deus Homo* ("Why God Became Man"), and it describes for us the essence of the absolute necessity of the work of Christ in the atonement (see note below). It is Christ's advocacy and righteousness that justifies guilty sinners (1Jo 2:1); it is Christ's shed blood that liberates by paying the price of our redemption (1Jo 1:7); and it is Christ's endurance of the wrath of God that propitiates (1Jo 2:2).

Notes:

The participle in verse 24 "being justified" has given commentators problems because it is difficult to see how all who have sinned are "being justified." Moo following Cranfield tries to take verse 23 universally ("everybody") and verse 24 in a non-particular ("anybody") sense (Moo, 227). It seems a difficult sell to make "all" mean universality ("everybody") in verse 23 and then mean lack of particularity ("anybody") when "picked up" in verse 24. Perhaps a better interpretation of the participle's relationship to the universal "all" is given by two considerations. First, the verb translated "fall short" (ὕστερονται) is either passive or middle, not active. Because of the common occurrence of the aorist passive, this present tense form should probably be understood in a passive, not middle, sense. It is translated "impoverished" of the prodigal son in Luke 15:14. So verse 23 may read, "For all have sinned and are impoverished of the glory of God." Being impoverished is not a restatement of the nature of the sin of all, but rather a statement regarding the consequence of that sin. Note Moo's comment regarding the glory of God: "'Glory' in the Bible characteristically refers to the magnificent presence of the Lord, and the eternal state was often pictured as a time when God's people would experience and have a part in that 'glory' (e.g., Isa. 35:2; Rom. 8:18; Phil. 3:21; 2 Thess. 2:14)" (226).

The second consideration is the fact that the participle is sometimes used adverbially to express the purpose of the main verb. The BJU Greek Handbooks notes: "the purpose participle is usually found after its governing verb and often is in the future or present tense" (179). Taken adverbially in relationship to the present tense, "are impoverished," yields the interpretation that all are impoverished of the glory of God, all have experienced this judgment for their sin [echoing 3:19], for the purpose of all being justified freely [as opposed to works]. Paul's argument is not that all are justified; his argument is that all are impoverished for the purpose of God's plan of gratuitous justification. The purpose behind condemning men as sinners lies in the design of God to justify them freely.

Verse 26 comes closer than any other passage in the Scripture, I believe, in describing for us what is called the consequent absolute necessity of the work of Christ in the atonement (see Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation*, 187-189). The question is asked by theologians as to whether the death of Christ was the only way God could have effected the salvation of sinners, or were other options open to Him. John Murray put it this way: "Why did not

God realize the purpose of his love for mankind by the word of his power and the fiat of his will? If we say that he could not, do we impugn his power? If we say that he could but would not, do we not impugn his wisdom? Such questions are not scholastic subtleties or vain curiosities. To evade them is to miss something that is central in the interpretation of the redeeming work of Christ and to miss the vision of some of its essential glory” (*Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 11). The answers can be enumerated as three:

1. absolute necessity – God had to choose to save sinners
2. hypothetical necessity – God did not have to choose to save sinners, and once He did He had a number of options open to Him, and of these the death of Christ was the best
3. consequent absolute necessity – God did not have to choose to save sinners, but once He did the death of Christ was the only option open to Him.

Paul’s argument seem to support the consequent absolute necessity view in Romans 3:26 with the phrase, “so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” He begins by intimating that forbearance on God’s part was simply not enough to deal with the problem of sin (3:25). Paul argues for the centrality of the atonement of Christ to God’s plan of salvation against the centrality of the law in this passage (3:21-26). The purpose of the death of Christ in the mind of the apostle Paul was for God to be both just and justifier. Whether other plans of salvation might have accomplished this purpose, Paul does not specifically say, but his argument depends upon the answer to that question being “no.” To Paul this purpose, “that God might be just and justifier,” establishes the necessity of the atonement of Christ. If there were other options for the accomplishment of this purpose, Paul’s argument fails—i.e., the atonement of Christ was not really necessary for God to be both just and justifier in such a way that this purpose can be used to argue for the centrality of the cross against other options like the works of the law. But if there were no other options open to God, Paul’s argument becomes powerfully convincing. Clearly, not condemning sinners apart from the work of Christ would make Him the justifier but not just, for the penalty could never fit the crime apart from the penal sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God. This option was not open to God, for He cannot deny Himself; He cannot be unjust (2Ti 2:13). Condemning sinners to eternal perdition without the work of Christ would make Him just, but not the justifier, for none would be justified. This option was certainly open to God, for His will is free (Psa 115:3), yet it pleased Him more to be the justifier. Paul’s argument assumes that, having made the decision to become the justifier, God’s just nature made the atonement of Christ the only option available. Therefore, the atonement is absolutely necessary as a consequence of God’s decision to save. Having made that decision, there were not other options open to Him congruent with both his just nature and loving desire to justify.

The absolute necessity of the atonement needs emphasis in today’s pluralistic approach to man’s need for salvation. The idea that there are other options open to God beyond the gospel of Christ has been given great currency even by Bible-believing authors (see Dr. Roland McCune’s discussion in *Promise Unfulfilled*, 277-290). But what of Murray’s question, “Why did not God realize the purpose of his love for mankind by the word of his power and the fiat of his will? If we say that he could not, do we impugn his power?” Murray himself gives the answer of the consequent absolute necessity view: “But it is not presumptuous for us to say that certain things are inherently necessary or impossible for God. It belongs to our faith in God to avow that he cannot lie and that he cannot deny himself. Such divine ‘cannots’ are his glory and for us to refrain from reckoning with such ‘impossibles’ would be to deny God’s glory and perfection” (12-13). The key to understanding the necessity of the atonement is the truth that the center of the exigencies that make the work of Christ absolutely necessary are the nature and will of God Himself. Nothing outside of Him made the atonement absolutely necessary, but the dual fact that God is just and God willed to justify makes the work of Christ absolutely indispensable. God cannot do it some other way. H. G. C. Moule: “Was it eternally necessary that, if met, it must be met in this way, by nothing less than the delivering up of Jesus our Lord? Yes! There is no doubt that if a milder expedient would have met our guilt, the Father would not have ‘delivered up’ the Son. The Cross was nothing if not absolutely indispensable. There is that in sin, and in God, which made it eternally necessary that—if man was to be justified—the Son of God must not only live but die, and not only die but die in this way, delivered up, given over to be done to death, like those who commit great sin” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 107).

**Romans
3:27-31**

2. The word for “faith” appears 9 times in the 11 verses of 3:21-31. Clearly, NT Bible salvation involves faith. In verses 27-31, Paul helps us understand more clearly what saving faith is like by telling us 1) what saving faith precludes (the preclusion, v. 27), 2) what is not involved in saving faith (the exclusion, v. 28), 3) what the impossible alternative to salvation by saving faith is (the alternative, v. 29-30), and 4) what the rationale for saving faith is (the rationale, v. 31). List these below:

Answer: The preclusion is boasting; the exclusion is the works of the law; the impossible alternative is that God would be the God of the Jews only (for the Gentiles were never given the Law—in fact, even Abraham never had

it [4:13-15]), and the rationale for saving faith is that it is Scriptural – it establishes the Law (and the prophets, v. 21).

Application: Note the following illustrations of saving faith, and ask the class which they believe is the most Scriptural and why:

A man who does not know how to swim is in the middle of the lake, thrashing in desperation, in great need of salvation. Which method of rescue best illustrates the Bible truth of saving faith?

1. The lifeguard stands on the shore, throws a lifesaver ring as best he can into the middle of the lake near the drowning victim, and tells the victim that he must swim to the ring and trust it to help him swim to shore (the Roman Catholic view of the necessity of faith + the works of the church for salvation).
2. The lifeguard swims from the shore to the drowning victim and commands the drowning person to cling to his back as he swims ashore to safety. He admonishes the victim that he must hold on with all his might trusting only the lifeguard to make it back to the beach (the Arminian view that seems to see faith as part of the rescue effort; something that could be lost, and something that eventually leads to boasting [sinless perfection is an Arminian doctrinal error]).
3. The lifeguard swims from the shore to the drowning victim and tells the drowning person that he must quit thrashing around trying to swim on his own. If he would only admit his inability to help himself, go limp and trust the lifeguard, the would-be rescuer would snatch him from the water and never let him go under again until he got him safely ashore (the mediating position that seeks to eliminate boasting in the context of the reality of human responsibility—the faith of the person rescued is real, but all the work is really done by the lifeguard, and no rational person would give the drowning victim the credit rather than the lifeguard).
4. The lifeguard swims from the shore and, because of the impossibility of saving someone thrashing to swim himself, the lifeguard knocks him on the head unconscious, snatches him from the water, and never lets him go under again until he had him safely ashore (the consistent Calvinist position that sees regeneration as a prior requisite to faith).

The view that best fits the teaching of Romans 3:27-31 is the view that emphasizes that faith is no reason to boast.

Many Arminians, on the one hand, believe that faith is a reason to boast and so they miss eternal security and advocate sinless perfection. On the other hand, many Calvinists believe that faith is a reason to boast, and so they miss the importance of human responsibility in God's plan of justification. They conclude that regeneration precedes faith, and the character of the doctrine of salvation as "gospel" that demands a response from all men is often lost.

What we are describing here really is the difference between the instrumentality of justification and the cause or ground of justification. Faith is the instrument of salvation, but the work of Christ is the ground of salvation. A piece of chalk is the instrument for writing an important truth on the board in Sunday School, but the teacher is the cause and ground of writing that note. I am not going to get the note written without the piece of chalk, but no one credits the chalk with making a great point on the chalkboard. Faith is no reason to boast, in spite of the fact that it is the instrument God requires to appropriate the benefits of the work of Christ that save.

Notes:

Note that Paul believed that the law of faith required a rationale; specifically, it had to be in agreement with the teachings of Scripture. It is in this sense that saving faith is not only faith in the person of Christ, but also faith in the truth (2Th 2:13). We live in a day in which irrational faith is heartily endorsed in many circles, some of these claiming to be Bible believing. But the saving faith Paul spoke of could not circumvent the propositional authority of the Scriptures, and this was an important point for the apostle. Not only must the Word incarnate be understood in regard to saving faith, but also the Word inscripturated stands as this saving object. It is the work of Christ that agrees with Scripture that saves, not something else innovative and personal. Hear Francis Shaeffer's important words regarding the rational nature of saving faith:

"One must analyse the word Faith and see that it can mean two completely opposite things.

"Supposing we were climbing in the Alps and were very high on the bare rock and suddenly the fog shuts down. The guide turns to us and says that the ice is forming and that there is no hope and that before morning we will all freeze to death here on the shoulder until none of us have any idea where we are. After an hour or so, someone says to the guide: 'Supposing I drop and hit a ledge ten feet down in the fog. What would happen then?' the guide would say that you might make it till the morning and thus live. So, with absolutely no knowledge or any reason to support this action, one of the group hangs and drops into the fog. This would be one kind of faith, a leap of faith.

"Supposing, however, after we have worked out on the shoulder in the midst of the fog and the growing ice on the rock, we had stopped and we heard a voice and the voice said: 'You cannot see me, but I know exactly where you

are from your voices. I am on another ridge. I have lived in these mountains man and boy for over sixty years and I know every foot of them. I assure you that ten feet below you there is a ledge. If you hang and drop, you can make it through the night and I will get you in the morning.

"I would not hang and drop at once, but would ask questions to try and ascertain if the man knew what he was talking about and if he was not my enemy. In the Alps for example, I would ask him his name. If the name he gave me was the name of a family from that part of the mountains, it would count a great deal to me. In the Swiss Alps there are certain family names that indicate mountain families of that area. For example, in the area of the Alps where I live, such a name would be that of Avanthey. In my desperate situation, even though time would be running out, I would ask him what to me would be the sufficient questions, and when I became convinced by his answers, then I would hang and drop."

From Francis A. Schaeffer, *He is There and He is Not Silent* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), pp. 124-125.

The Word of God and Salvation by Faith Alone

**Romans
4:1-3, 9-12,
13-15**

3. Genesis 15:6 is the first time the word “believe” appears in the Scripture, and so it is no coincidence that this is the verse Paul uses to show that the doctrine of salvation by faith alone establishes rather than contradicts the teachings of the Law of Moses. Abraham is a key figure in the Jewish doctrine of salvation based on the Old Testament, because for the Jew, being saved meant being a “child of Abraham” (kind of like our use of the term “born again Christian”). Consider the following passage from the inter-testamental Book of Sirach (44:19-22):

**19 “Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations,
and no one has been found like him in glory.**

**20 He kept the law of the Most High,
and entered into a covenant with him;
he certified the covenant in his flesh,
and when he was tested he proved faithful.**

**21 Therefore the Lord assured him with an oath
that the nations would be blessed through his offspring;
that he would make him as numerous as the dust of the earth,
and exalt his offspring like the stars,
and give them an inheritance from sea to sea
and from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth.”**

For each section of Romans 4 listed below, write down the passage from Sirach that Paul contradicts.

Answer:

Romans Passage:	Sirach Passage Contradicted:
4:1-3	“Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations, and no one has been found like him in glory” (44:19) [Paul points out that Abraham had nothing to boast about.]
4:9-12	“he certified the covenant in his flesh, and when he was tested he proved faithful. . .Therefore the Lord assured him with an oath” (44:20b – 21). [Paul points out that Abraham had the oath sworn to him long before he was circumcised in the flesh (Gen. 17) – see Genesis 15:8-21.]
4:13-15	“He kept the Law of the Most High” (44:20a). [Paul points out that keeping the Law had nothing to do with Abraham’s righteousness, because 1) the promises call for a response of belief, not works; they concern what someone else will do, not us (v. 14); and 2) because the Law brings only a consciousness of wrath. No man can fulfill the law (v. 15).]

Application: It is interesting that Paul discusses baptism not here in 4:9-12, but in Romans 6:3-7. In so doing, Paul does not compare baptism to circumcision, but rather he compares baptism to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Bible never specifically compares circumcision to Christian baptism, although one passage does apply the truth symbolized by circumcision to the Christian’s salvation experience in the same context that

baptism is discussed (Col. 2:11-13). So what can the Christian learn about his salvation from Abraham's seal of circumcision? A comparison with the ordinance of baptism may be helpful:

Point of similarity between circumcision and baptism:

1. Both are symbolical signs of spiritual realities – neither is itself a spiritual reality (Rom. 4:11, “the sign of circumcision”; Rom. 6:5, “the likeness of His death”).
2. The spiritual realities symbolized by each are true of all believers – they symbolize the results of faith, regeneration and resurrection (Col. 2:11-13).
3. The symbolism of both signs is more than didactic; it is confirmatory. In other words, submitting to them not only teaches truth, it also clears the sensitive conscience and confirms that such a conscience exists. As such, both circumcision and baptism constitute basic forms of a believer's obedience (Gen. 17:12 and 1Pe 3:21).

Points of difference:

1. Each symbol signifies a different set of spiritual realities: circumcision – the unconditional nature of God's saving grace and covenantal love (infants are circumcised on the eighth day of their lives) and the cleansing power of regeneration in the removal of sin from the account of the believer (Col. 2:11, 13); baptism – the death and resurrection of Christ and the believer's commitment to discipleship in new life (Mat 28:19-20, Rom 6:4).
2. Each symbol was intended for a different economy in God's plan. Circumcision was given for the male descendants of Abraham, and those hired into the economy of Abraham's physical descendants (Gen. 17:9-13); baptism was given for the male and female disciples of Christ who professed their faith in Him (Mat 28:19-20, Act 2:38-42).

The important principle in the interpretation of symbols is to draw similarities where the Scripture draws similarities, and to draw distinctions where the Scripture draws distinctions. Christ, for instance, called Herod a fox (Luk 13:32). This was a symbol in much the same way that circumcision and baptism are symbols. There are points of correspondence between Herod and a fox in much the same way that there are points of correspondence between circumcision, baptism, and the spiritual realities they symbolize. We know that Christ probably did not mean that Herod was red and furry, or that he had a tale and four feet. These are not the points of correspondence between the symbol, fox, and Herod.

The practice of infant baptism is one example of the failure to recognize intended points of correspondence in regard to the symbols of circumcision and baptism correctly. Charles Hodge illustrates the problem in the Presbyterian tradition: “All therefore who were circumcised, professed to embrace the covenant of grace. All the Jews were professors of the true religion, and constituted the visible Church, in which by divine appointment their children were included. This is the broad and enduring basis of infant church-membership” (*Epistle to the Romans*, 117). But are all infants baptized on the eighth day? Are all employees of Presbyterian businessmen baptized after they accept a job from their visible Church employer? Is infant baptism restricted to male babies the way circumcision was? And if the answer to all these questions is “no,” on what basis can we say the Bible doctrine of circumcision demands that we baptize infants at all? Simply put, we cannot say that it does, because the Bible does not say that it does. This is simply not a point of correspondence between the two signs. That said, the NT makes clear that the sign of circumcision has much spiritual truth to teach the NT believer as it did the Old.

Note: The text of Sirach regarding Abraham's keeping the Law of God likely reflects the truth of a passage like Gen. 26:5, “because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.” If so, then Sirach must be understood as not implying that Abraham obeyed the Mosaic Law, although the text does not make this clear. The fact remains that the inspired written Law of God postdates Abraham. In addition, the verse is a fascinating description of Abraham in light of Genesis's frankness about both the spiritual failures and the successes of this patriarch. It may be that Genesis 26:5 is best taken vicariously, as a description of Abraham in light of the righteousness that was imputed to him by faith. Not because of his works, but because of his faith in the work of Yahweh, Yahweh now considered Abraham a man whose obedience was truly perfect.

From The Honeycomb

logizomai and the doctrine of “imputation”
Romans 4:3-8

We have already said that “faith” is a key word that drew the apostle Paul to Genesis 15:6. But “faith” is not the only word in that verse that becomes an emphasis in Paul's view of how men and women are saved. Rivaling “faith”, the Greek financial word *logizomai* is used 5 times in verses 3-8. The NASB translates the word “credit” in each of these cases except in verse 8 where the negative is expressed as “will not take into account”. The KJV translates the word with three different English words as follows: “count” (vv. 3, 5), “reckon” (v. 4), and “impute” (v. 6, 8). Read this passage on “crediting” in regard to our salvation, and then think about what it would

be like to be allowed to go on a shopping spree with your Dad's credit card. We know that salvation does not involve exploding debt, usurious interest, and annual fees, but in what way is our salvation transaction truly similar to a credit card transaction?

Hint: The correct answer will define the doctrine of imputation.

Answer: When we purchase something with a credit card, we are treated as though we paid for something that we have not paid for. The analogy is helped by thinking about purchasing something with your Dad's credit card. Now we are being treated as though we are paying for things that we will never have to pay for because our Dad will get the bill rather than us. But whomever gets the bill, the fact remains that at the moment of the credit transaction, I am being treated as though I've got a lot of money that I do not have with me at that moment.

Application: This is the essence of the Bible doctrine of imputation. We are credited with what we do not have. Paul's quotation of David's Psalm makes this abundantly clear. God credits righteousness to the account of those who are actually in truth sinful. You see, when we get saved, God declares us righteous in a legal sense, but He does not make us righteous in a moral sense. Righteousness is imputed to us even though we are still sinners. Sanctification is the process in salvation whereby God makes us righteous in a moral sense. It is a process that begins with the clean new life of regeneration, but not the complete recreation of our natures. This is often misunderstood in light of the KJV rendering of 2Co 5:17. The NASB follows the oldest manuscript evidence with its rendering, "behold, new things have come." Another reading not found in the KJV with eastern support is "behold, all new things have come." Whatever the true text, the verse must be interpreted in the light of the larger truth that the sinful nature does not become new at the moment of salvation.

Notes:

MacArthur's emphasis in *The Gospel According to Jesus* needs greater appreciation for the doctrine of imputation.

Romans 4:16-22 Genesis 16:1-2 17:17-18 18:9-15 20:1-3	4. Paul describes the faith of Abraham in this passage as "hope against hope." Clearly, the faith of Abraham faced the test of insurmountable odds in regard to the age of his body and the age of his wife, Sarah. Paul tells us how Abraham's faith in the end was triumphant, but Genesis makes clear to us that getting to this end involved failures as well as successes. Look up the Genesis passages listed, and note some of the failures that came after Abraham became a believer in chapter 15. What does this teach us about what Paul calls "hope against hope" faith?
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Answer: The failures of faith include the Hagar episode and the birth of Ishmael, the laughter of unbelief on the part of both Abraham and Sarah, and the repeat performance event with Abimelech in which Abraham failed to protect his wife as his own. The lesson here is that strong faith is a growth process that often involves times of failure. Verse 20 makes clear that the opposite of "not waver in unbelief" is "grew strong in faith." This growth process eventuated not only in the birth of Isaac (Gen. 21), but also in the faith that God could raise him from the dead if he had too (Gen. 22, Heb 11:17-19, Jam 2:23).

Application: Paul refers back to Genesis 15 as he speaks of Abraham's strong faith (4:22). This is where it all began, but it is not where it all stopped for Abraham. The faith that moved Abraham to offer Isaac in Genesis 22 began in Genesis 15, but Abraham could not have offered Isaac in Genesis 15. A growth process had to take place, and this growth process is the evidence of genuine faith. This is the point that James makes especially when he says that "faith was perfected" and "the Scripture was fulfilled" (Jam 2:22-23). The idea here is that God's purpose for our saving faith is that it be a growing faith too. There is a sense in which its purpose here on earth needs to be fulfilled or made complete. Faith is the key to eternal life, but the purpose of eternal life is fruitfulness. Why have a fruit tree if there is no fruit? How can we tell that the fruit tree is truly a fruit tree if there is no fruit? But the growth of this fruit is gradual, and failures are often involved. Abraham was described the way he is by Paul in spite of the fact that his faith was flawed at times. He was an old man before he really lived like the apostle Paul describes him, and yet the power of his faith overcame the power of his failure in terms of his legacy and fruitfulness. We should not allow failures to discourage our faith and stop that process.

Notes:

**Romans
4:17, 21**

5. What did Abraham's hope against hope eventually teach him about God?

Answer: God can give life to the dead, and call into being that which does not exist (v. 17), and what God had promised He was able also to perform (v. 21).

Application: Charles Hodge makes an important remark regarding the theology that Abraham's faith came to understand: "'God is described as controlling with equal ease things which are not, and those which are. The actual and the possible are equally subject to his command. All things are present to this view, and all are under his control (*Epistle to the Romans*, 124). Today, the error of open theism is sweeping evangelical circles. This is the idea that God's omniscience cannot know things that do not yet exist. Gregory Boyd is one proponent of the error. He said: "If God does not foreknow future free actions, it is not because his knowledge of the future is in any sense incomplete. It's because there is, in this view, *nothing definite there for God to know!* (italics his). . . one is not ascribing ignorance to God by insisting that he doesn't foreknow future free actions if indeed free actions to not exist to be known until free agents create them (*The God of the Possible*, 16-17; quoted in McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled*, 301). Clearly, this is not the faith that Abraham came to have. God could know that Abraham and Sarah were to have a child long before it happened and in spite of the fact that it truly constituted a "future free action." In fact, God not only knew it would happen, he knew the precise time (Gen 18:14). And He not only knew the precise time, He promised it would happen (Rom 4:16), and because this promise is an act of God's sovereign grace, it is guaranteed to happen (Rom 4:16). Other proponents of the error of "open theism" include Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, and Bruce Reichenback.

The key to strong faith is knowing our strong God. He sees the possible as actual, and He is able to perform the promise He has made to you and me.

Notes:

**Romans
4:23-24**

6. What do the final three verses of chapter 4 teach us about God's purpose in giving us the Scriptural account of Abraham's life?

Answer: It was written not for his sake only, but for ours also. We need the same kind of righteousness Abraham had, and we need to find it in the same way—through saving faith. Secondly, Jesus Christ is the focal point of this faith. For Abraham, this was a forward look embodied in the promise that his seed would be a blessing to the entire world, and it likely included some things Abraham learned from Melchizedek in Genesis 14. For us, it is a backward look that engages the facts of history.

Application: Charles Hodge had an interesting observation in regard to this comparison: "[Abraham] believed that a Saviour would be born from his family, when his having a son was an apparent impossibility. We are only called upon to believe that the Saviour has been born, has suffered, and risen again from the dead—facts established on the strongest historical, miraculous, and spiritual evidence, vers. 20, 24, 25." How true that is, and how inexcusable the unbelief of our generation when compared to the tremendous faith of Abraham.

Notes:

"Hope Secured: The Relationship of the Justified to God"

Romans 5

Lesson 5

Purpose:

Your students will develop the spiritual confidence appropriate for those who have been justified in Christ with a greater appreciation for the results of justification in their lives: peace with God, hope, and union with Christ.

In A Nutshell

Beginning in verse 1 with, "Therefore, having been justified by faith," chapter 5 begins a section in Romans that makes some important conclusions about the new relationships enjoyed in the justified believer's life. Paul's presentation of the gospel of God in Romans began with an argument for the need of the gospel (1:18-3:20) and then continued with an argument for the nature of the gospel – justification by faith alone in Christ alone (3:21-4:25). With chapter 5 we begin to learn about the wonderful results of the gospel of justification by faith as they touch the life of justified people. This chapter covers the first set of these results, which describes how the believer's relationship to God has changed. The second set of these results explains how the believer's relationship to sin has changed (ch. 6); the third, how the believer's relationship to the law has changed (ch. 7); and the fourth, how the believer's relationship to the flesh has changed (ch. 8). The life of the one who has trusted Christ for salvation is a life that has changed. Chapter 5 includes three results of justification that impact our relationship to God: the security of peace (5:1-4), the security of hope (5:5-11), and the security of union with Christ (5:12-21).

Answers and Applications:

The Security of Peace

Romans	1. In order to fully appreciate Paul's statement, "we have peace with God through our Lord
5:1-2	Jesus Christ," we need to look back and remember what we had with God before we came
1:18	to know Jesus Christ. Take a look back at the verses listed and list some opposites of
2:2	peace that describe what our relationship to God was like prior to our justification.
2:5	
3:5	
3:19	

Answer: Two words are especially prominent in the description of the sinner without Christ: wrath and judgment. 3:19 adds "guilty" (KJV) or "accountable" (NASB); the word is ὑποδικος and is used only in 3:19 in the NT. It combines the preposition ὑπο meaning "under" and the word δικη meaning "penalty."

Application: It is important to understand that wrath and judgment are objective realities. They are words that describe not how we feel, but rather the facts of our relationship to God. In the same way, the peace that the apostle Paul speaks of here is an objective reality, not something merely subjective. He is not telling us how we feel or should feel as justified believers, he is telling us what new fact applies to our relationship with God no matter how we feel. Consider the difference between the following statements: "The leadership of President Bush has given me peace since 9/11"; and "The leadership of President Bush has given me peace from terrorist attack since 9/11." The statements are very close, but whereas the first statement describe how I feel, the second describes the facts that are true about my life. We could say that the leadership of President Bush has not given

leaders of the Democrat party peace since 9/11, but we would have to say that his leadership has given them peace from terrorist attack since 9/11. Paul is not talking about feeling when he says we have peace with God; he is talking about fact that our feelings cannot change.

Notes:

From The Honeycomb

kauchaomai
Romans 5:2, 3, 11

This important verb gets repeated three times in the first half of Romans 5. It is clearly a very important concept for our understanding properly our new relationship with God as justified believers. The repetition is easier to discern from the NASB because that translation uses the same English word in this passage to translate kauchaomai in each of the three occurrences. The repetition is less clear as one reads the KJV because that translation uses more variety in its translation of the word using three different English words to translate this one Greek word. Read the verses in the KJV and list the three English words used to translate kauchaomai in that translation. Then consult the NASB if you have one and write down that fourth English word. What do all these words have in common?

Answer: The three words in the KJV are “rejoice” (v. 2), “glory” (v. 3), and “joy” (v. 11). The word in the NASB is “exult.” What the words have in common may be best described as happy confidence. Note that this verb negatively describes the false religion of Jews without Christ in Romans 2:17. There both the KJV and the NASB translate the word “boast” and couple it with the idea of confidence in 2:19.

Romans 5:2-4 1 Peter 4:1-5 James 1:2-4	2. We have seen that happy confidence is an important response that should characterize the life of justified believers who now have peace with God. Verse 2 teaches that we have happy confidence on the basis of (epi) the hope of the glory of God (contrast 3:23). Paul elaborates on hope later in the passage. Verse 3 then teaches that we have a happy confidence in the midst of (en) tribulations. Tribulation seems to be the opposite of peace. According to this passage and the others listed, why should believers sustain a happy confidence in the midst of tribulations?
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Answer: The rationale for happy confidence in the midst of tribulation is the fact that God uses tribulations in our lives to help us mature spiritually, to make us more Christ-like people. The word translated “worketh” in verse 3 in the KJV is translated “brings about” in the NASB. The point here is that the end is never in doubt when God is allowing us to go through tribulations. This does not mean that failure is never experienced along the way. What it does mean is that before God is done using tribulation in our life, we will have the following results: perseverance, proven character, hope, endurance, and rest from sin.

Application: As I write this lesson, it is a little after 6:00 am Sunday morning. I had hoped to have the lesson I am working on well completed yesterday, but the interruptions of family life, let’s just call them tribulations, kept me from accomplishing all that I had hoped to do. Now as I come to writing this answer to question number two, at this very moment, my wife reports to me that our washing machine has leaked all over the floor of the laundry room again. This time the leak is different because it comes after we had finally found the problem and successfully fixed the machine a week or two ago. Although it is doubtful that I will complete this lesson on time for my class today, and although it is doubtful that I will ever be able to fix that machine on my own without an expensive repair bill, and although it is doubtful that my wife is going to get the laundry done this morning she was hoping to, nevertheless, there is something about which I can have no doubt—God allows us to experience tribulation to help us grow spiritually. God has an important reason for a broken washing machine at 6:00 am Sunday morning. Upon hearing of the leak from my wife, my first thought was “Why in the world is Maureen doing laundry at 6:00 am Sunday morning?” My second was “Doesn’t she understand the time it takes to get one of these lessons together?” These insightful lines of reasoning were followed by a grunt and groan as I left my

Sunday school lesson and worked to dry the floor under the machines. So how did this tribulation work spiritual growth in my heart? It showed me my selfishness and lack of love for my wife. Was the experience an enjoyable one? No. But was it one that helped me grow spiritually, that can even help others grow spiritually as I make it part of this Sunday school lesson? Yes! Whether we enjoy it or not, God is going to use tribulation to help us grow. Some get more than others, and so they grow more. The growth part takes longer when we respond poorly to the exposure of our weaknesses and sinfulness, but God keeps the pressure on until we either grow or He takes us home (Heb 12:7-11). This point could also be illustrated with the experiences of the Pilgrims on the Mayflower. See David Beale's *The Mayflower Pilgrims* pp. 102-103, 106, 133-135, 137-138. Now we could all say what a bunch of fools they were and ask who would want to live like they did, but remember that these are the ones whom God used to begin a nation.

Notes:

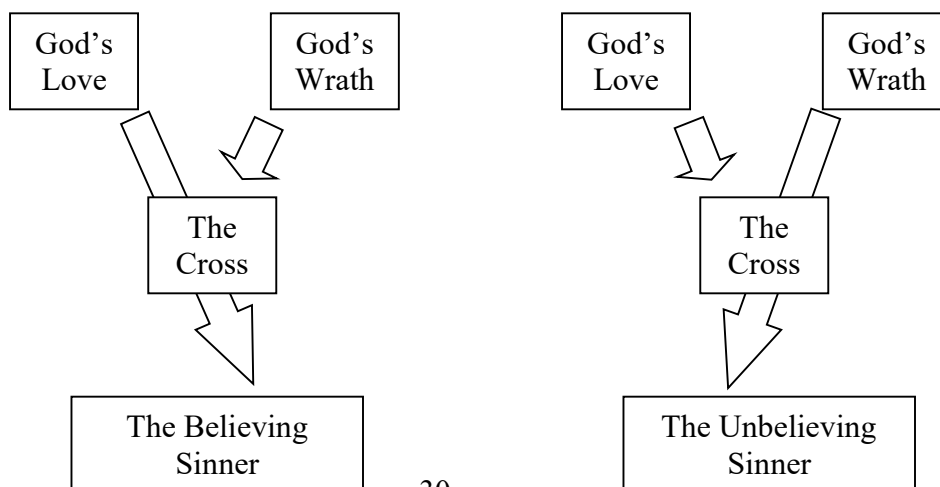
The Security of Hope

Romans
5:5-11

3. The theme of this section is the wonderful truth that hope in God will not disappoint. Paul gives two proofs this is true. The first involves the reliability of God's word. God had promised that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all mankind through the prophesying of God's people (Joel 2:28-29). In verse 5 Paul draws attention to the fact that this is exactly what God has done – God's love is shed abroad by our hearts through the indwelling Holy Spirit. God keeps His word. [See "Notes."] Verses 6-11 give the second evidence that hope in God will not disappoint, and together these verses comprise one of the most important passages in the Bible regarding the doctrine of reconciliation. After reading the section, give a definition for the Bible doctrine of reconciliation.

Answer: God's love for His enemies slaughtered Jesus Christ so that these enemies could be happily confident in a new relationship as His friends. It describes a change in God's disposition, not our own (v.9 – the work of Christ deals with God's wrath, not man's). The issue is not that God loves you as a sinner and wishes you would stop hating Him. The issue is that God loves you as His creature, but burns with wrath at you as a sinner, and you need His love to remove your sin and thereby remove His wrath.

Application: Sometimes it is difficult to understand how God could love sinners and be wrathful against sinners at the same time. God, of course, is able to do things that we do not understand. But one focus that has helped me to better understand how the wrath of God for sinners combines with the love of God for sinners is the focus that the apostle Paul has in this passage – the cross of Christ. Did you notice the emphasis on death in this key passage on reconciliation: "Christ died" (v. 6); "die" and "die" (v. 7); "Christ died" (v. 8); "by His blood" (v. 9); "through the death of His Son" (v. 10)? When we see the slaughter of Jesus Christ we see the combination of God's wrath and love for sinners. It is important to understand that for those not in Jesus Christ, the love of God can go no further than the death of Christ, but the wrath of God certainly can. It is also true that for those in Jesus Christ, the wrath of God can go no further than the death of Christ, but the love of God certainly does [see diagram below]. This is Paul's point in the passage – because we were successfully reconciled through the death of Christ, we shall also be successfully given eternal life in Him (v. 10). The fact of reconciliation proves that hope will not disappoint.



Notes:

My interpretation of Romans 5:5 is not a common one. It is based on interpreting *εν ταις καρδιαις ημων* as “by our hearts” rather than “in our hearts.” The instrumental view of the phrase seems to better explain what is actually going on in the main verb *εκκεχεται* because it no longer takes place within the heart. “Pouring out within the heart” is a very difficult idea. The instrumental view also seems to better fit with the understanding that Paul has Joel 2 in mind as he pens these words (the LXX has this same verb in Joel 2:23). Hope does not disappoint because God keeps his Word, not necessarily because we have a feeling of love pouring throughout our hearts. Rather, because our hearts now love others with the love of God through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, Paul concludes that Joel 2 has happened. The love of God reaches all flesh through the witness of His Spirit-filled people (Act 1:8). The fact that God has kept His Joel 2 promise proves that hope will not disappoint.

**Romans
5:8**

4. Romans 5:8 is a popular verse because is it one of the important verses on the Romans Road. That is certainly a great use of the verse. But there is important truth about Jesus Christ in this verse that we can miss if we fail to read the verse carefully. The original language places a large emphasis on the word “His” in the first phrase of the verse, and some newer translations correctly translate the phrase, “God demonstrated His own love toward us.” If when Jesus Christ died, God was demonstrating “His own” love toward us, what must we conclude about who Jesus Christ is?

Answer: The verse clearly implies that Jesus Christ is God. For example, what would you think of my love for my country if I were to claim to demonstrate that love by enlisting my brother into the Marines and volunteering him for combat [Note – the idea of giving a son for battle is not a good comparison here because we naturally assume that if someone sends his son, he himself cannot go; clearly, if the father is equally suited to the task, if there is only a need for one volunteer, and if the father sends his son instead, that comparison might work]? That might say more about my hatred for my brother than it would about my love for my country, wouldn’t it? (Remember that David did this for Uriah in 2Sa 11.) Yet when we read that God demonstrated His own love by sending Jesus Christ, we know that we are not reading about God’s hatred for Christ, but rather about His love for sinners. The only explanation for this is that Paul wrote the verse and we read the verse with the assumption that Jesus Christ is God, that an expression of God’s love is an expression of Christ’s love. God demonstrated his own love toward us in the death of Christ because the connection between God and Christ is closer than the connection between my brother and me. God and Christ are one and the same.

Application: This is an example of what I like to call the ubiquitous testimony for the deity of Christ in the Bible. Proof texts calling Jesus Christ God do, of course, exist in the NT (see Romans 9:5 for example). But even beyond these proof texts, the Scripture testifies to the deity of Christ in many ways that are not immediately apparent. B. B. Warfield quotes R. W. Dale who compared it to the salt component in salt water: “Such texts [explicit proof texts] . . . are but like the sparkling crystals which appear on the sand after the tide has retreated; these are not the strongest—though they may be the most apparent—proofs that the sea is salt: the salt is present in solution in every bucket of seawater. And so . . . the truth of our Lord’s divinity is present in solution in whole pages of the Epistles, from which not a single text could be quoted that explicitly declares it” (*Lord of Glory*, 1-2).

Notes:

The Security of Union With Christ

**Romans
5:12-14**

5. Consider the following lines from John Donne’s “Meditation XVII,” *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (1623): “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main [mainland]. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend’s or of thine own were. Any man’s death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” What is Donne’s point about humanity, and how does it agree with Paul’s teaching about mankind here?

Answer: Donne's point about humanity here is that mankind is a unit. What happens to one affects the whole. His view agrees with the doctrine Paul teaches in Romans 5:12-14, because here Paul speaks of the sin of the first man Adam as something that has affected us all. By virtue of the way God created mankind as a human race, by virtue of our union with Adam, "death spread to all men, because all sinned." Paul goes on to reinforce his conclusion regarding the effect of Adam's sin by noting that death reigned long before anyone transgressed a law of God the way Adam had (from Adam to Moses).

Application: God has chosen to make mankind a human race, a unit. He chose to put Adam at the head of that race, and so his actions affected the whole more than any of our actions ever will. But God has also chose you and I to be the part of this human race that He wants us to be, and the choices we make impact far more than ourselves. We saw earlier how that the hard choices the Pilgrims made were greatly responsible over time for the existence of the United States of America. The choices you make, for better or worse, will impact all of humanity in ways only eternity can completely reveal. You do matter. Remember George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*. On the one hand this is true simply because you are a member of the human race, but on the other if you are a Christian it is doubly true because you are a member of the Church of God. The principle holds true for anything that God has made you a member of. You impact more than yourself.

Notes: There are a number of theories about how the truth of Romans 5:12 worked exactly, i.e., how it happened that all mankind became sinners the day Adam sinned. Clearly, the view to be avoided is the Pelagian teaching that there is no connection between the sin of Adam and our sinfulness. This heresy teaches that the phrase, "and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" means that the only reason we die is because we ourselves have sinned. The obvious implication of the view is that if we simply avoid sinning, we will avoid dying. Charles Hodge offers the following salient reasons for rejecting the Pelagian view: 1) the verb is aorist – "all sinned" at one point in time in the past; 2) the entire parallel between Adam and Christ drawn up in this passage by Paul fails if the union of the sinner with Adam is denied; 3) the view is argued against by verses 13 and 14 where Paul asserts that death reigned even over those who do not sin the way Adam did; and 4) the view is simply not true to life – many die who have never consciously sinned (infant mortality, etc.) [*Romans*, 149]. Other theories that seek to explain this mystery have been offered by orthodox interpreters.

Some of these theories emphasize a subjective approach (Calvin, Luther), i.e., that the nature of man changed when Adam sinned and therefore all born to Adam are born sinners. The trouble with this view is the phrase "because all sinned" in verse 12. This subjective emphasis can take the position that "because all sinned" in verse 12 means either "all sinned because they existed in some genetic sense in Adam when he sinned" or "all became sinners" when Adam sinned because they inherit his nature. The problem with the first idea is that it creates a kind of inexorable rule that says that whatever my genetic predecessors have done, I did with them. It is true that the writer of Hebrews teaches that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek while in the loins of Abraham, but his point in that passage is not to prove that Levi deserves personal credit for paying Melchizedek tithes, but rather that the priesthood of Melchizedek is superior to the priesthood of Levi, the normal recipient of the tithe in the OT (Heb 7:4-10). The problem with the second idea is simply that the phrase "because all sinned" does not mean "all became sinners."

Others emphasize an objective approach to understanding how it happened that all mankind became sinners the day that Adam sinned (Hodge). The concern here is especially to avoid any intimation that the righteousness of Christ is anything but an imputed righteousness. Against the teachings of Roman Catholicism, the objective interpretation of Romans 5 believes that when it comes to saving righteousness, it is all about what God does to our account the moment we believe, not about what must be done gradually to our nature over time. So if the saving righteousness of Christ in this passage is a matter of imputation, so must also be the impact of the sin of Adam, its parallel in this regard. For these interpreters, "because all sinned," means "because all sinned in God's eyes by virtue of the fact that He had designated Adam to play this role." Furthermore, they interpret the phrase "the many were made sinners" (v. 19, καθίστημι) to mean "the many were categorized as sinners." The view seems to have trouble defining original sin, however: "'Original sin,' as the Confessions of the Reformers maintain, 'is not the substance of man, neither his soul nor body; nor is it anything infused into his nature by Satan, as poison is mixed with wine; it is not an essential attribute, but an accident, i.e. something which does not exist of itself, an incidental quality,' &c. Bretschneider, vol. ii., p. 30. These Confessions teach that original righteousness was lost, as a punishment of Adam's sin, and by that defect, the tendency to sin, or corrupt disposition, or corruption of nature is occasioned" [Hodge, 185]. Trying to make the sin of Adam the "occasion" of corrupt nature without making it the cause of corrupt nature is not entirely satisfying, for it leaves open the possibility of a different outcome than corruption. No other possible outcome appears to be in view in Romans 5.

Perhaps the best approach is to borrow from both the subjective and objective understandings. While Hodge's concern for imputation is important, it must also be admitted that the salvation experience also involves a subjective aspect called regeneration. Our natures are not changed, per se, but they are revived by union with the life of Christ. "Christ liveth in me" is subjective, not objective, soteric truth (Gal 2:20). This life begins with regeneration, the new birth of a sinner, and is entirely complete from its beginning. It is this distinction between

life and nature that enables us to admit to a subjective aspect in Romans 5 without capitulating to Roman Catholic soteriological heresy. Our natures do not change, but our lives do, the moment we are saved. Something is either alive or dead – there is nothing gradual about it – and consequently the doctrine of imputation is reinforced in the subjective realm rather than denied.

That said, what then is our answer to the question, “How did Adam’s sin make us all sinners?” I believe that 5:12 gives us the answer in the phrase, “and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Death in this passage as well as in Genesis 3 is primarily spiritual death. Note that God told Adam, “In the day that you eat of the tree you shall surely die” (Gen 2:17). In fact, the possibility of physical immortality was evidently not completely withdrawn until after the pronouncement of the curse and the withdrawal of the tree of life (Gen 3:22). But the moment Adam sinned brought him and his race with him spiritual death, not physical death, and this is what Paul refers to in verse 12. By virtue of the fact that God chose to create mankind as a human race with Adam at its head, all mankind sinned when Adam sinned [the objective truth] and all mankind lost their spiritual lives when Adam lost his [the subjective truth]. Men and women, the sons of Adam and Eve, are born sinners because they were born spiritually dead, spiritually separated from Christ. The virgin birth is the one exception, for here the incarnation of the Son of God with the complete human nature of man precluded the birth of a being who is spiritually separate from God, i.e., spiritually dead.

**Romans
5:12**

6. Theistic evolution is the idea that God used evolution to create the world. What problem does the truth of 5:12 create for this idea?

Answer: The verse clearly teaches that man existed before death entered the world (κοσμος). Evolution of any kind requires that death was around long before man showed up. So the issue separating creationists and theistic evolutionists is not merely how long the days in Genesis 1 are or whether or not there is a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, but rather the entire foundation of soteriology taught by Paul here in Romans 5.

Application: Paul was a big believer in the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis. The same could be said of Jesus Christ (Mat 19:3-8). Those who deny the historical reliability of the first chapters of Genesis do not share the same faith Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul had in the Scripture.

Notes:

**Romans
5:15-21**

7. The chapter ends with first a contrast (vv. 15-17) and then a comparison (vv. 18-21) between Christ and Adam designed by Paul to give us a thorough understanding of how union with Christ has changed our relationship to God. The comparison teaches us how Adam and Christ are alike: they both involve “one/One” – Adam is the only cause of a broken relationship and Christ the only source of the righteousness that restores it; and they both involve “many/all” – everyone born in Adam is condemned in sin by his act and every one born in Christ is given eternal life by His grace. What does the contrast teach (vv. 15-17)? How is our relationship to Adam different than our relationship to Christ?

Answer: Adam created the broken relationship with God called judgment; Christ creates the restored relationship to God called a free gift.

The cause of restoration is more powerful than the cause of judgment (5:15). The first is empowered by the sin of Adam, the second is empowered by the grace of God.

The superabundance of restoration is more plentiful than the abundance of judgment (5:16-17). Where judgment did abound, grace did much more abound. Judgment is enacted because of only one sin, but grace is enacted because of many sins (see also v. 20).

The reign of restoration offers choice that the reign of judgment does not (5:17). The reign of judgment is a reign of death enslaving sinners with no choice; the second is a reign of those who are willing to choose life..

Application: What binds together our new relationship with God, the grace of Jesus Christ, is more powerful than what broke that relationship, the sin of Adam. In this new context, God is acting and not Adam, and God is better than Adam. In this new context, all sin has been accounted for, not merely one, and all is more abundant than one. And finally, in this new context men and women have a choice, they have access to grace by virtue of their faith, not their birth, and the choice to live overcomes the fact that we were born to die.

“Bondage Broken: The Relationship of the Justified to Sin”

Romans 6:1-14

Lesson 6

Purpose:

Your students will come to understand the reasons why it makes no sense for those saved by grace to continue in sin, and they will come to better understand the foundations of sanctification, which provide the key in every day life to real victory over sin for the glory of God.

In A Nutshell

Paul uses the content of chapters six and seven of Romans to answer two important questions: “Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?” (6:1), and “Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?” (6:15). The first of these emphasizes the believer’s new relationship to sin, and Paul’s answer will be the focus of lesson six (6:1-14). The second of these emphasizes the believer’s new relationship to the law, and Paul’s answer will be the focus of lesson seven (6:15-7:25). Clearly, what the questions have in common is the truth that believers in union with Christ ought to experience victory over the sin that characterized their lives prior to their union with Christ. This is a topic theologians call “progressive sanctification.” The underlying axiom of progressive sanctification is the truth that things that are alive grow. Chapter 5 spoke of the spiritual life that comes to those united with Christ in justifying redemption (5:17-18), and now chapters 6-8 will speak of the spiritual growth that characterizes the lives of those living that spiritual life of Christ.

Answers and Applications:

Death With Christ Breaks Sin’s Bondage

Romans 6:1-2 5:17, 20	1. History tells us that the 18th century French philosopher, Voltaire, once said, “God will forgive me; that is his business.” Here we have the “enlightened” thought of modern man in all its glory – “continue in sin that grace may abound.” Long before modern man enlightened himself, however, the apostle Paul anticipated the fact that the gospel he preached might be characterized in these terms. His response is emphatically negative: “May it never be!” What is the uniqueness of the gospel Paul preached that left him particularly open to the charge, “You are teaching: ‘continue in sin that grace may abound!’”?
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Answer: The gospel of Jesus Christ is unique in the world because it is the truth that teaches simply: “those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (5:17) and “where sin increased, grace abounded all the more” (5:20).

Application: The gospels contrived by the religions of man do not leave themselves open to the charge the apostle Paul faced as he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. Moule sees this same testimony to the wonderful uniqueness of the gospel of grace: “In later days, the meaning of faith has sometimes become hazy, until it has seemed to be only an indistinct summary-word for Christian consistency, exemplary conduct or good works. But if this, or anything like it, had been St. Paul’s message, we should not have had Romans 6:1 worded as it is. Whatever objections were encountered by a gospel of acceptance expounded on such lines . . . , it would not have encountered the objection that it seemed to allow men to be unholy. What such a gospel would seem to do would be to emphasize the urgency of obedience in order to gain acceptance; the vital importance on the one hand of an internal change in our nature (through the operation of the sacraments, according to many); and then on the other hand the practice of Christian virtues, with the hope, in consequence, of acceptance, more or less complete, in heaven” (130). No one cured of cancer hopes to get it again so as to enjoy the amenities of the hospital; no lame man who can finally walk decides that he is going to spend the rest of his life in a wheel chair anyway because it

is going to build arm strength; no blind man who can now see purposes to keep his eyes closed at all times so as to hear better. These scenarios are simply unthinkable, and so is the Christian who purposes to continue in sin.

Notes: Voltaire is quoted in Moo (356).

**Romans
6:3-7**

2. Paul supports his emphatically negative answer with a question based on a truth: “How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” (v. 2). The premise here that forms the basis for Paul’s response is simply the fact that the dead do not live. There is then, a sense in which Christians are people who have died. What Paul means by this is that we are people who no longer have the old life we once had – a life apart from the death of Christ. The passing of this old life, Paul tells us, was accomplished through something called our “baptism into His death” in verses 3-4. Verse 5 mentions the fact that even “the likeness” or “form” of Christ’s death is something important for us to understand. What was the form of Christ’s death according to verse 6? What was this death like? What does this form of death say about the death of our old man?

Answer: The death of Christ was crucifixion. This was not death by old age, but rather a violent execution that rendered its victim completely lifeless. The death of who we were prior to Christ – the old man and the slave of sin – is complete.

Application: The first important application of this passage is the sense we get from it that there is no such thing as a Christian who is not baptized in the understanding of the apostle Paul (see note below regarding the definition of “baptism” in this passage). Clearly, there is a close connection between the ordinance of baptism in the name of Christ and identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This is an indication that the best mode of baptism is immersion.

The key application of the passage, however, is simply the truth that the Christian is no longer what he used to be. He used to be the slave of sin, but now he is not. Union with Christ through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit has given him life that means that the old sin-slave has died. What is more, he died a violent execution-style death – he is not coming back. The purpose was so that we who were the slaves of sin (“the body of sin”) are now completely acquitted by virtue of death (v. 7). Sin has lost its jurisdiction in much the same way the Roman Catholic Church lost its jurisdiction over the pre-reformer and Bible translator John Wycliffe when Wycliffe died. 44 years after his death, the Council of Constance unearthed the bones of Wycliffe and had them burned as they posthumously excommunicated him as a heretic. They believed that their authority could reach beyond the grave, but truth be told, Wycliffe undoubtedly simply sat in the heavens with His Lord who laughed and scoffed at the vain imaginations of this wicked pope and his satanic council. Dead people do not live, therefore the efforts of the Roman Church to reign posthumously over John Wycliffe were entirely in vain. In the same way, because our old man, the slave of sin, has been crucified, sin cannot demand service the way it once did.

Notes: One of the difficult interpretive issues in this passage is the need to understand whether Paul is referring to water baptism or Spirit baptism in this passage. It is my view that the first reference to baptism in v. 3 is a reference to water baptism. After that, the references involve Spirit baptism.

In verse 3, Paul speaks of both “baptism into Christ Jesus” and “baptism into His death.” The first of these seems to be a shortened form for “baptism into the name of Christ Jesus” (1Co 1:13; 1:15; 1Co 10:2, “into Moses”; 1Co 12:13). Here I see water baptism (Act 2:38, 8:36). The second idea, “baptism into His death,” however, is clearly distinguishable from “baptism into Christ Jesus” in verse 3, and so it is also distinguishable, I think, from water baptism. In this verse Paul asserts that all who have been water baptized (“baptized into Christ Jesus”) have also been Spirit baptized (“baptized into His death”). This disallows, of course, infant baptism. So in verse 4, Paul mentions that it is through this “baptism into death” that we are buried with Christ. He is not saying that we are buried with Christ by baptism into Christ Jesus, but rather that we are buried with Christ by “baptism into death” – a specific kind of baptism, that Spirit baptism that is distinguishable from water baptism in the name of Christ Jesus (vv.3-4).

There is a crying need for the definition of some important terms in this passage:

1. “baptized into Christ Jesus” (v. 3) – water baptism, i.e., “baptism into the name of Christ Jesus”
2. “baptized into His death” (v. 3-4) – Spirit baptism into union with Christ, i.e., the act of the Holy Spirit by which the death of Christ becomes vicariously the death of the believer
3. “united with Him in the likeness of His death” (v. 5) – “united with the likeness of His death, i.e., crucifixion”
4. “old self” – not a description of our nature, but rather a description of our pre-Christ existence; the old man is what we were prior to union with Christ, the new man is what we are after union with Christ. We only have one nature as Christians, not two – an old one and a new one. Moo: “But Paul does not claim that ‘we’ have been crucified with Christ; it is ‘our old man’ who has been so definitively put to death. . . . Many popular discussions of Paul’s doctrine of the Christian life argue, or assume, that Paul distinguishes with these phrases between two parts or ‘natures’ of a person. With this interpretation as the premise, it is then debated whether the ‘old nature’ is replaced with the ‘new nature’ at conversion, or whether the ‘new nature’ is added to the ‘old nature.’ But the assumption that ‘old man’ and ‘new man’ refer to parts, or natures, of a person is incorrect. Rather, they designate the person as a whole, considered in relation to the corporate structure to which he or she belongs. ‘Old man’ and ‘new man’ are not, then, ontological, but relational or positional in orientation. They do not, at least in the first place, speak of a change in nature, but of a change in relationship. ‘Our old man’ is not our Adamic, or sin ‘nature’ that is judged and dethroned on the cross, and to which is added in the believer another ‘nature,’ ‘the new man.’ Rather, the ‘old man’ is what we were ‘in Adam’ –the ‘man’ of the old age, who lives under the tyranny of sin and death” (373). “On the other hand, Paul in Eph. 4:22-24 command Christians to ‘put off the old man’ and ‘put on the new man.’ . . . For Paul makes it clear that the believer has been transferred from the old age of sin and death to the new age of righteousness and life (Rom. 6:6 and Col. 3:9-11) just as he indicates that

the ‘powers’ of that old age continue to influence the believer and must be continually resisted – hence the imperatives of Eph. 4:22-24” (374). To put off the old man and put on the new man is to stop acting like what we no longer are and to start acting like what we have become:

Old Man	New Man
Sinner spiritual dead	Sinner spiritually alive
Enslaved to sin	Free from sin

5. “body of sin” (v. 6) – Not a reference merely to our physical bodies as though “sin” were some kind of synonym of “physical”; rather, a reference to “ourselves (a parallel to “we” in the verse) in relationship to sin as slaves”
6. “destroyed” (v.6) – Could be understood as “destroyed” reaching back to the idea of the brutal effectiveness of crucifixion, but the word is not quite strong enough to communicate this kind of idea in this context. Certainly, if the old man is crucified (and it is), it is destroyed. But I do not think the word should be connected to what precedes, but rather to what follows – the idea of no longer being a slave of sin. I would translate, then, “that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be ‘loosed’ or ‘delivered,’ so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.” Note this usage of καταργεω in Romans 7:2 and 7:6.

Life With Christ Breaks Sin’s Bondage

Romans 6:4-5, 23 **3. Because the resurrection of Jesus Christ is historical fact, the gift of a new existence for those whose old man has died is simply guaranteed. Everyone who is truly saved truly has a life that is completely different. Paul uses two words to describe this difference, one in verse 4 and another in verse 23. What are these words?**

Answer: The words are “newness” and “eternal.”

Application: The new spiritual life that comes with union with Christ has two characteristics, not just one. Not only is it eternal, it is also new. These are not two different lives we are reading about in these two different verses. They are the same life, but this one life has two characteristics – it is new and it is eternal. What this leaves no room for is the professing believer who believes that he has eternal life but knows that he really does not have newness of life. This truth is again what makes the idea “continue in sin that grace may abound” so ridiculous. The fact of the matter is that those who know the grace of eternal life also know the grace of new life. Because the life they are living is new life, not the old, they simply cannot continue in sin indefinitely (Heb 12:7-11). Every possessor of eternal life will either have new life and be walking in it, or they will have new life and be walking miserably in the discipline of the Lord. True believers only have those two options open to them. God is never mocked or fooled.

Notes:

Romans 6:8-10 **4. Remember that verse 5 referred to “the likeness” of Christ’s death and “the likeness” of His resurrection. We saw that in terms of death this referred to the crucifixion of our existence as the slaves of sin. When it comes to resurrection, what does Paul say Christ’s resurrection was like? How does understanding “the likeness” of Christ’s resurrection help us understand what our own new life is like?**

Answer: Paul explains what he means by “the likeness of His resurrection” in verses 9 and 10 of this passage. There he emphasizes the permanence of Christ’s resurrection. His resurrection meant that He did not have to die ever again. Understanding the permanence of the resurrection of Christ helps us to understand that our new life is a permanent thing too. Just like Christ “is never to die again,” so also we are never to lose our new and eternal life in Christ. The believer is eternally secure – he cannot lose the life he has in Christ anymore than Christ Himself can die again.

Application: Two applications are important in verses 8-10. The first is the need for faith in the context of these understandings emphasized by verse 8. We are free from sin’s slavery; yet we sin and can even battle addictions. We have new and eternal life; yet we are growing old and dying. Just as there were three days between the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ that required faith on the part of those who had buried Christ (which they

failed to exercise), so also there is a gap of time between the death of our old man and our own complete experience of new/eternal life with Him. We have died (past tense); we shall live (future tense); and so now we must be believing that our freedom from sin and possession of new and eternal life is true (present tense). The second application also concerns faith. Verse 9 contains a causative participle, “knowing,” that could also be translated “because we are knowing.” Understood this way, then, Paul is saying: “we are believing” (v. 8), “because we are knowing” (v. 9). The faith God asks the believer to exercise is always a faith based on propositional truth, never a leap in the dark. Faith is strengthened through a more informed understanding of the Word of God (Rom 10:17).

Notes:

Living Life Without the Bondage of Sin

6:11-14 5. The word *logizomai* (λογίζομαι) makes the book of Romans a great book for
 4:3 accountants. It is the job of an accountant to do journal entries and keep track of
 4:6 account balances. These balances ultimately describe the book value and other
 4:8 financial realities of a company. Accountants will either debit or credit an
 4:9 account when they do a transaction, and much of the work of the accountant is
 4:22 figuring out which transaction goes where and when. In Romans, Paul talks a lot
 about spiritual crediting/debiting. *Logizomai* means to “credit, calculate,
 compute, reckon, consider.” We have to calculate correctly in regard to certain
 spiritual realities to keep our lives in balance with God’s will for them. Of the 40
 times *logizomai* occurs in the NT, half of these occur in Romans. By the time we
 get to 6:11, we encounter the 16th time the word has occurred already in this book
 (“Likewise reckon ye also”). But this time, there is something different about the
 reckoning. Look at some of the other listed uses in chapter 4 and see if you can
 find the difference in 6:11.

Answer: Up to this point, Paul’s discussion has centered upon God doing the transaction. He reckons us righteous. Now in 6:11, Paul challenges us to reckon something about ourselves. The first challenge of sanctification is self-imputation, to make true in our eyes what is certainly true in God’s eyes. We are sons of adoption, but it can take time for adopted children to truly consider themselves part of their new family.

Application: We have witnessed the power of self-imputation in the struggle for freedom in Iraq. Note the following similarities between the situation in Iraq and what God says about our new life in Christ:

	Iraq	Salvation
Goal:	Political freedom	Spiritual freedom
Legal Problem:	Tyranny of a dictator	Tyranny of sin
Legal Solution:	Remove the dictator	Crucify the old man; loose the body of sin from sin’s reign (v. 6)
Legal Result:	Legally free Dictatorships are illegal in Iraq	Legally free (v.7, δεδικαιωται)
Practical Problem:	External – insurgency Internal – mindset of Sunnis (distaste for democracy)	External – the world Internal – the mindset of sin
Practical Solution:	New law enforced by new security Change thinking	Yield to a new master Change thinking (v. 13, Ro. 12:1-2)
Practical Result:	No dictatorship experiences No dictatorship consequences	Life that is new (w/o sin) Life that is eternal (w/o sin)

Notes:

Interesting Insight

“To countless people the discovery of this ancient truth, or the fuller grasp of it, has been indeed like a beginning of new life. They have been long and painfully aware, perhaps, that their strife with evil was a serious failure on the whole, and their deliverance from its power sadly partial. And they could not always command as they would the emotional energies of gratitude, the warm consciousness of affection. Then it was seen, or seen more fully, that the Scriptures set forth this great mystery, this powerful fact of our union with our Head, by the Spirit, for life, for victory and deliverance, for dominion over sin, for willing service. And the hands are lifted up and the knees strengthened, as the man uses the now open secret—Christ in him, and he in Christ—for the real walk of life” [H. G. C. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans* (1958; reprint, Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2001), 135].

From The Honeycomb

"instruments of unrighteousness"
or
"instruments of righteousness"

Hoplā (ὅπλα) Romans 6:13

“Instruments” is a pretty general word in our language. We know about musical instruments, cooking instruments, and flight instruments in the cockpit of an airplane. So what kind of “instruments” exactly is Paul referring to in Romans 6:13? Here’s how we find out:

Take a look at the three other passages in which the word occurs, and see how it is translated in these:

John 18:3, “cometh thither with lanterns, and torches, and _____”
2 Corinthians 6:7, “by the power of God, by the _____ of righteousness”
2 Corinthians 10:4, “for the _____ of our warfare”

Now draw your conclusion. What kind of instruments are we talking about here? What does this metaphor describe exactly? How does this understanding of the word add to your understanding of Paul’s point?

Answer: The idea is weapons. The heavily armored Greek soldier was called an ὅπλιτης. The second key to progressive sanctification or Christian growth after “self-imputation” is “self presentation.” We need to present ourselves on a daily basis to the Lord for His use. Failure to do this is to present ourselves for the service of sin. This does not make us slaves of sin again – that cannot be the case any longer for the child of God. But it does make us the willing employee of sin. In some ways, this is far worse.

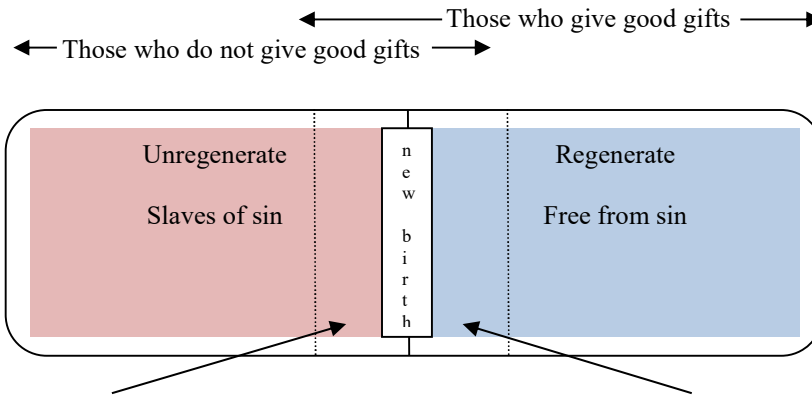
Application: We are either weapons of unrighteousness or righteousness. There is no middle ground, no merely defensive position. You are either a weapon for the cause of Christ, or a weapon against it. Often “cultural Christianity” provides the allusion that something of a middle ground exists, but in reality to fail to be sold out as an offensive weapon for Christ is to be ineffective as an offensive weapon against Christ. We have to choose the side of righteousness, or we fight on the side of unrighteousness.

Notes: Paul’s dichotomy between the unregenerate as slaves of sin and the regenerate as free from sin raises a question he does not address in this passage. What must we conclude about regenerate believers who sin and unregenerate unbelievers who act morally? Paul accounts for the sin of regenerate lives in Romans 6 as failures to reckon correctly and yield to God (Rom. 6:11, 13). But what must we say about the good things that unregenerate people do at times? Asked differently, if a slave of sin has to sin, why do they do good things at times? A key to accounting for that reality is Luke 11:13, where the Lord Jesus admits that evil fathers give good gifts to their children. The following chart uses that verse to expand Paul’s two-category understanding of the difference

redemption makes in the believer's relationship with sin to a four-category approach that seeks to answer these more specific questions. Consider the following diagram:

Luke 11:13

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children. . .”



Who: Unregenerate <i>runaway slaves</i>	Who: Regenerate <i>employees of sin</i>
Why: The image of God in man	Why: Failure to self-impute righteousness
Why: God's goodness in the earth ("common grace")	Why: Failure to yield members to God
Example: Cornelius (Acts 10:1-4)	Example: Lot (2 Pet. 2:7-8)

So what we have here is a more detailed discussion of the topic at hand, the new believer's relationship to sin.

Notice that Paul's categories of slave of sin and free from sin are clearly outlined. Then notice that the truth of Luke 11:13 is also considered. It turns out that both believers and unbelievers belong to both the category of those who give their children good gifts and those who do not. So two more additional categories are added to the chart. When this is done, we are left with four categories: (1) Slaves of sin who do not give good gifts; (2) slaves of sin who do give good gifts; (3) freemen who do not give good gifts; and (4) freemen who do give good gifts. What this means for the freeman is that he is free not to sin, but he has the choice still to sin, what the chart calls becoming *the employee of sin*. He is never to be the slave of sin again, but he can choose to serve sin if he wants to. On the other hand, the unbeliever is always the slave of sin, although he does at times act like what the chart calls *a runaway slave*, doing things like giving good gifts to his children. What accounts for his ability to do so is the fact that the image of God, though fallen, remains a part of the unregenerate believer, and the fact that God's goodness is operative and influential in the world he lives in through civil authorities, believers whose lives are like salt, and general and special revelation. These exceptional good deeds of unbelievers are good only in the sense that God recognizes them as moral, but they are filthy rags in terms of their ability to merit justification and peace with God. Cornelius is a good example of an unregenerate man whose morality God recognized as something moral, just like He recognizes that the unbelievers' giving good gifts to their children or running into a burning building to rescue children from a fire are morally good acts. Yet in spite of these episodes of morality, the sinner still belongs to sin and must eventually return to his cruel task master. The firefighter who saved three children from the fire the month before divorced the mother of his own three children leaving them abandoned and fatherless. Lot is the example of a regenerate man whose life demonstrated the believer's ongoing capacity to be the employee of sin. Lot was not sin's slave. He could have lived differently. So slaves of sin can runaway at times, but they are still the slaves of sin and will ultimately return to their masters. Believers are free from sin and as children of a faithful holy Father will never be allowed ultimately to continue in it.

"A Second Chance: The Relationship of the Justified to the Law"

Romans 6:15 – 8:8

Lesson 7

Purpose:

Your students will come to understand the importance of God's law in the life of the believer. In order for Christians to grow spiritually, they need to understand how to use God's law. Paul's emphasis throughout this passage is that unlike unbelievers, believers do not use God's law as something that condemns them. Instead, the believer always has a second (and third, fourth, etc.) chance to be what God wants him to be.

In A Nutshell

In the last lesson, we examined Paul's answer to a question that only the gospel of free grace in Christ Jesus has to confront: "Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?" (6:1). Here in lesson seven we see that he asks and answers another: "Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?" (6:15). These questions are very similar, and they have the same emphatic answer: "May it never be!" But their difference clues us into what the unique focus of the apostle becomes beginning in 6:15: the justified man's relationship to God's law. This topic comes next in the apostle's argument because one of the keys to our freedom from the bondage of sin is the fact that we are no longer under the law but under grace (6:14). Were we under the law, there would be no second chance (Jam 2:10-11, to break the law in one point is to become a transgressor—period); because we are no longer under the law, sinners who stumble and fall can still live for God tomorrow. But that raises the question, "Why not just sin?" Paul's answer to this important question comes to its conclusion in Romans 8 with the word "therefore" (8:1). In 8:1-8 he summarizes three features of the justified man's relationship to the law that argues against his sinning: 1) the law does not condemn the Christian (8:1-2); 2) the law cannot save the Christian, but Christ did (v. 3); and 3) the law must be fulfilled in the Christian (vv. 5-8).

Outline for the passage:

Lesson 7: A Second Chance: The Relationship of the Justified to the Law 6:15 – 8:8

Freedom from the law does not change the destructive nature of sin 6:15-6:23

Freedom from the law calls for submission to Christ 7:1-6

My need for freedom from the law incriminates my nature, not the law's nature 7:7-25

Freedom from the law should result in a fulfillment of the law 8:1-8

Answers and Applications:

Freedom from the Law Does Not Change the Destructive Nature of Sin

Romans
6:15
7:2-3
7:7-8

1. Before we can understand what it means to not be “under the law,” we need to understand what Paul means by “the law.” Paul employs two connected meanings of the term in the book of Romans, and they are both illustrated by 3:20-21. Sometimes by “law” he is speaking about the doctrine of salvation and means (1) “requirements that differentiate sin/righteousness and penalties that differentiate condemnation/blessing.” At other times by “law” Paul is concerned about the doctrine of revelation and means (2) “the first 5 books of the OT written by Moses.” Look at the verses listed from our lesson 7 passage. As Paul uses the term “law” here, does he focus on meaning 1 or 2?

Answer: Paul focuses on meaning 1 in these verses because his emphasis is on the importance of the law in terms of salvation, not in terms of revelation. The distinction here helps to understand how Paul can teach on the one hand that Gentiles sin “without law” (Rom 2:12, i.e., without the advantage of having the oracles of God [3:2] – meaning #2), and on the other hand that all flesh (Jews and Greeks, 3:9) are condemned by their violation of the law (3:19-20, i.e., by the differentiation between sin/righteousness and condemnation/blessing found in the law – meaning #1). See dispensationalism/antinomianism handout.

	Salvation	Revelation
Meaning of “Law”	Distinction between right and wrong, blessing and condemnation	First five books of the old testament
Applicability to the Jews	under the law (Rom. 3:9, 19-20)	under the law (Rom. 2:12)
Applicability to the Gentiles	under the law (Rom. 3:9, 19-20)	without/not under the law (Rom. 2:12)

	Saved	Unsaved
Pronouncement of the the first meaning of “Law”:	Blessing	Condemnation
Applicability to the Jews	Free from the law/under grace	Under the law
Applicability to the Gentiles	Free from the law/under grace	Under the law

Application: So it is important to understand the difference between Paul’s doctrine of salvation emphasis and his doctrine of revelation emphasis when it comes to the phrase “not under the law.” In terms of salvation, unsaved Jews and Gentiles are “under the law” (3:19-20) and saved Jews and Gentiles are not “under the law” (6:15). In terms of revelation, however, both saved and unsaved Jews and Gentiles are all “under the law” (1Ti 3:16; Rom 3:31). As Christians, while we rejoice that we no longer have to worry about the role of the law in terms of salvation, it is not true that we no longer have to worry about the role of the law in terms of the importance of revelation for our spiritual growth. This can be seen in 6:19, which shows that “lawlessness” is an evil that still has grave consequences for believers who are no longer “under the law” in the sense meant by Paul. “Not under the law” has been the mantra for the antinomianism (“against the law”) of the church in our day, and we need to protect those we teach from this error. This is the view that believes that the requirements of God’s law are somehow antithetical to Christian growth because they require conformity to God’s standards: “In addition, He has also brought a glorious freedom from the curse of the Law. **By that I mean freedom from the constancy of its demands to perform in order to please God and/or others.** It is a freedom from the fear of condemnation before God as well as from an accusing conscience. Freedom from the demands of other people, from all the *shoulds* and *oughts* of the general public. . . . It is a freedom to become all that He meant me to be, *regardless of how He leads others*. I can be me—fully and freely. It is a freedom to know Him in an independent and personal way. And that freedom is then released to others so they can be who they are meant to be—different from me” (emphasis in bold, mine; emphasis in italics his; Charles Swindoll, *The Grace Awakening* (Carmel, NY: Guideposts, 1990), 80-81). There are a number practical dangers for the Christian related to such a view. First, the Christian is never free from the need to please God and others. The only person left under this view is self. Pleasing self is not the key to Christian growth, it is its antithesis (Rom 8:8, 15:1-2). Second, freedom from conscience never contributes to Christian growth; rather, the conscience is one of the tools of the Spirit in sanctification (2:15). Third, Paul makes clear that within the context of the church, the “shoulds” and “oughts” of the general public are an important regulator for Christian thought that contributes to the growth of the Christian (Phi 4:8, “whatsoever is of good report”). Finally, spiritual growth is not accomplished by finding your “independent and personal way,” but rather through submission to a common authoritative teaching that leads to the image of Christ, who Himself obeyed the law in its every detail (Eph 4:11-16; Rom 8:28).

Notes: The issue of antinomianism goes back to the failure to distinguish between the saving role of the law and the revelatory role of the law:

The Dispensationalist view:

“Under the law”	“Not under the law”
Israel	The Church

Paul’s view:

The law’s role in salvation		The law’s role in revelation	
“Under the law”	“Not under the law”	“Under the law”	“Not under the law”
Unbelievers (Jew and Gentile)	Believers (Jew and Gentile)	Israel: + Ethical application + Gospel application + Ecclesiological application Church (Jew and Gentile) and OT Gentile believer: +Ethical application +Gospel application	Church (Jew and Gentile) and OT Gentile believer: +Ecclesiological application

The shaded area summarizes the focus of the apostle Paul in Romans 6:15 – 8:8 as he discusses the justified man’s relationship to the law. In its most extreme forms, forcing dispensationalism on this passage results in eliminating grace from the life of the OT believer or law from the life of the NT believer. But even in a milder way, failure to recognize these distinctions on the one hand distances the OT believer from the “not under the law” salvation blessing of this passage, so central to Paul’s doctrine of salvation in the passage, and on the other hand it distances the NT/non-Israeli unbeliever from the “under the law” condemnation that has stopped every mouth and made the whole world guilty before God (3:20-21). Moo illustrates the problem in his commentary on this passage by teaching that the OT believer is saved but not fully free from the law in the sense meant by Paul in this passage: “It is only when we ask the question about the status of OT saints—a question that was probably not in Paul’s mind at the time—that a problem arises. Nevertheless, it is clear that OT saints, while not suffering all the penalties incurred through he law, were bound to that law in a way that NT saints are not. Their status is somewhat anomalous, as they participate in the same salvation that we experience—through faith in conjunction with the promise—yet experience also that ‘oldness’ and sense of bondage which was inescapable for even the OT saints” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 422). Note that it was very difficult to hear this “sense of bondage” in the words of David in Romans 4:6-8, a passage that Paul presents as normative for the NT salvation blessing.

The ongoing relevance of the law for those “not under the law” in the sense meant by Paul is well defended by the words of Ken Barker, *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church: The Search for Definition*, ed. by Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992): “It must first be borne in mind that the law was given to the redeemed people of God as a means of expressing their love to God as well as a means of governing their relationship to God and to each other. It was not a way of salvation but a way to enjoy an orderly life and God’s fullest blessing within the covenantal, theocratic arrangement” (295). He goes on: “The negative attitude toward the law in certain New Testament references is due to an unlawful use of the law. Jesus’ conflict in, for example, Matthew 5 and 23 was not with the law and the Old Testament but with the ‘letter-of-the-law’ interpretations and accretions made by some of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Similarly, what Paul condemned in Romans and Galatians was not the law or obedience to the law but the use of the law in a legalistic manner to merit salvation or sanctification or both. [new para] The only proper role the law can plan for unregenerate people is to reveal the darkness of their sin against the backdrop of the radiant light of God’s holiness and point them to the Savior (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:24; 1 Tim. 1:8). But for the person of faith it is the gracious revelation of God’s righteous will and is to be followed as the grateful and joyful expression of that faith (cf. Pss. 1, 19, and 119). There are, however, certain obvious exceptions, such as the purely ceremonial laws—those types and shadows that found their fulfillment and reality in Christ (see Hebrews). [new para] Even if *τελος* in Romans 10:4 means ‘termination’ instead of something like ‘completion,’ the statement that Christ is the termination of the law must still be qualified. Otherwise, one cannot account satisfactorily for the numerous instances where the New Testament uses the Law (as well as other parts of the Old Testament) for exhortation and for application of eternal truths and principles, particularly in the areas of spiritual life, morality, and ethics (cf., e.g., Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; 15:4; 19:5, 18-19; 22:37-40; Acts 23:5; Rom. 4:3; 7:7; 9:15; 12:19; 13:9; 1 Cor. 5:13; 9:9; 2 Cor. 4:6; 6:16; 8:14-15; 13:1; Gal. 3:6; 4:30; 5:14; Eph. 6:1-3; 1 Tim. 5:18; Heb. 10:30; 13:5; James 2:8-11, 20-24; 1 Peter 1:15-16—the selections here were deliberately restricted to uses of the Pentateuch). If the ethical and moral law reflected in the Torah has been abrogated, how can New Testament writers legitimately use the

references listed above to express, substantiate, support, reinforce, or give authority to the points they make? Surely this common New Testament practice strongly implies that the cited passages are authoritative for the church today” (296).

**Romans
6:16-23**

2. We learn very quickly in this passage that the choice confronting the believer in the context of freedom from the law is not a choice between slavery and freedom, but rather a choice between slavery to an old master (sin) and slavery to a new master (obedience, 6:16). Focus on verses 17-19 of this passage, and try to answer the following: Where does true obedience start? How is true obedience measured? What are the opposites of true obedience? And what is the result of true obedience?

Answer: True obedience comes “from the heart,” so it starts in the heart (v. 17); it is measured by a form or pattern of teaching or doctrine (v. 17); its opposites are impurity and lawlessness (v. 19); and its result is progressive sanctification or Christian growth into the image of Christ (v. 19).

Application: Obedience is not true obedience unless it is from the heart obedience. Salvation has changed our hearts and given us the capacity now to obey. It is not that obedience is no longer important for the one saved by grace, but rather that it is now possible (Tit 2:11-12). Yet although true obedience is from the heart, this does not mean that it is something personal, creative, or spontaneous. Rather, true obedience is measurable by a form or pattern whose content is teaching or doctrine. Obeying from the heart is not doing whatever you feel like doing; obeying from the heart is conforming to what teaching/doctrine says we ought to be. Note that one of the opposites of true obedience is lawlessness. Freedom from the law does not call for lawlessness, it calls for true obedience. Finally, the crux of progressive sanctification is obedience to objective truth or doctrine. One is not growing closer to the Lord by following the Spirit’s leading to disobey the clear commands of God’s law. It is important for the believer to be committed to true obedience in order to grow spiritually; too often disobedience is couched as spiritual growth in our day and age.

Notes:

Freedom From the Law Calls for Submission to Christ

**Romans
7:1-6**

3. This next passage compares the believer’s new relationship to the law to the relationship of a widow to the law. Paul tells us that a woman whose husband has died is free to marry another man without committing adultery. What makes this the case, the fact that the law no longer applies to the woman, or the fact that while the law still applies to the woman, its application to the woman has changed?

Answer: What is new in the life of a widow is not that the authority of the law in her life has passed away. Clearly, she is free to marry another man only because God’s law says she is free to do so. For the same reason it might be noted that she is not free to be married to another woman, or to two other men. What has changed is the way the law applies to this woman in view of the change in her status. She is still under the authority of the law, but that authority applies to her in a different way now.

Application: Freedom from the law for the believer does not mean that the law no longer has authority over the believer. Lawlessness is still a real possibility to be avoided (6:19). What freedom from the law means for the believer is that the authority of the law now applies to him differently than it does the unbeliever because the believer’s status has changed. Dead and risen in Christ, the believer is one who is completely acquitted before the law of God. He is now under its authority as one who bears fruit for God (7:4), whereas prior to his salvation he was under the authority of the law as one who bore fruit for death (7:5). The authority of the law can no longer condemn us, not because it has lost authority, but rather because we have obeyed the law perfectly in Christ. So freedom from the law means being joined to Christ. It means being submissive to the will of the One whose food was to do the will of Him that sent Him (John 4:34; Matt. 28:19-20).

Notes: Note from verse 1 that the Roman Christians Paul was writing to could be described as those who knew the law. There is some question as to whether Paul refers here to the law of Moses or not, but Moo’s arguments in favor of the view are compelling: “Paul never elsewhere uses *nomos* to refer to secular law, and he certainly uses the word in 6:14, 15 and in most of chap. 7 with reference to the Mosaic law. . . . In any case, new converts would have been exposed to the OT and the law early in their Christian instruction” (*Epistle to the Romans*, 411-412). Clearly, freedom from the law does not excuse ignorance of the law. Paul expected God’s people to know their Bibles.

From The Honeycomb

How would you define a “married woman” (NASB) or a “woman which hath an husband” (KJV)?

The word translated “married” and “which hath an husband” is the following Greek word:
hupandros = hupo + andros

hupo is the Greek preposition that means “under,” and andros is the Greek word for male or husband;
use this information to fill in the blanks below and define a “married woman”:

A “married woman” is a “_____ - _____ - _____ woman”

Answer: A “married woman” is a “under – a – man woman.” It is important for all women to understand that entering into a marriage relationship includes obtaining a new authority in their lives.

The Law’s Nature vs. My Sin Nature

Romans
7:7-14

4. In this section Paul defends the nature of the law by comparing it to the believer’s sinful nature. Examine that comparison by labeling each characteristic below either “God’s Law” or “my nature”:

Answer:

can distinguish between good and evil (v. 7)	God’s law
unable to distinguish between good and evil (v. 7)	my nature (“sin”)
producer of covetousness (v. 8)	my nature (“sin”)
deceiver that lies about being alive (vv. 9, 11)	my nature
designed for life (v. 10)	God’s law
holy (v. 12)	God’s law
holy, righteous, and good (v. 12)	God’s law
good (2) (v. 13)	God’s law
a cause of death (v. 13)	my nature
utterly sinful (v. 13)	my nature
spiritual (v. 14)	God’s law
a cruel taskmaster (v. 14)	my nature

Application: Beyond the obvious vindication of the nature of the law of God (important in a day in which God’s law is viewed as oppressive and burdensome), it is important also to note that sin had no meaning apart from the existence of God and His law. There is no moral good or immoral evil in a world void of God and His law. That we are able to assign a qualitative moral difference between frying a fish for lunch and roasting your daughter for dinner depends upon and inevitably presumes the existence of God and His law. The world wants to mischaracterize both God’s law (as something oppressive and unreasonable) and human nature (as something better than sin).

Notes:

**Romans
7:15-25**

5. In the last question Paul compared God's law against our sinful nature with some comparative descriptions. In this section, he continues that comparison by noting their conflicting demands. The law's demands correspond to the good that we want to do, and our sinful nature's demands corresponds to the evil that we end up doing. But in Paul's description of the struggle, there are important signs of pending victory which anticipate the guarantee of victory in verses 24-25. One sign of victory is emphasized by verses 17-19. There we find that as believers, our sinful natures are no longer the sum total of who we are. I am responsible for my sin, but I am distinguishable from my sinful nature. That portends victory. The other sign of victory is what this passage says is true about the believer's mind. What indications does the passage give that the believer's mind can battle his sinful nature (vv. 15-16, 21-25)?

Answer: The believer's mind can hate sin (v. 15), agree with the Law of God (v. 16), experience joy from God's law (v. 22, note that here the believer's mind is synonymous in some sense with the inner man), and finally serve the Law of God (v. 25).

Application: Note the connection between the law and the believer's mind so very important to victorious spiritual growth. The mind is the key. It is something that must be renewed by the law of God, and when it is it is that which can actually win victory over the flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Notes: I agree with Hodge, Moule, and many others (against Moo who follows Grotius) that what Paul describes in this passage is both personal testimony and post-conversion experience. All seem to admit that a simple reading of the passage yields this conclusion. What is missed in many interpretations is the fact that Paul is continuing his vindication of the law in this passage. His concern is not primarily to show how the believer lives a victorious life, although the passage gives some hints of this as discussed above. His concern is to argue from the fact of the struggle within the believer between his corrupt nature and his ever transforming mind that the law is good and that the believer's sinful nature is bad.

The chief exegetical obstacle to the post-conversion view seems to be the phrase in verse 14, "sold under sin." It is held that this description cannot agree with the status of a believer in light of all we learned in Romans 6 concerning the passing of our identity as slaves of sin (6:7-9). But between 6:7-9 and 7:14, Paul discussed the truth of 6:16, namely, that even those freed from the slavery of sin have a choice to slave for it again. What is new is that the believer has a choice. He has all the resources to not only be free from sin, but also to live free from it. Yet he must choose to appropriate these resources. To fail to do so is to enact a transaction that puts him back in the service or slavery of sin again. He sells himself into sin. It is in this sense Paul means "sold into bondage to sin" in 7:14. This describes a believer who has chosen to serve that cruel taskmaster even after having been freed indeed. It is a condition which he can change at any time by the grace of God and power of the Holy Spirit, but it is nonetheless real slavery according to 6:16.

Freedom from the Law Requires Fulfillment of the Law

**Romans
8:1-8**

6. Paul is not done talking about the believer's relationship to the law until 8:8. Here in chapter 8 we find statements that simply disallow antinomianism – the view that teaches that the Law has lost its authority over the believer. Read the passage and argue against antinomianism.

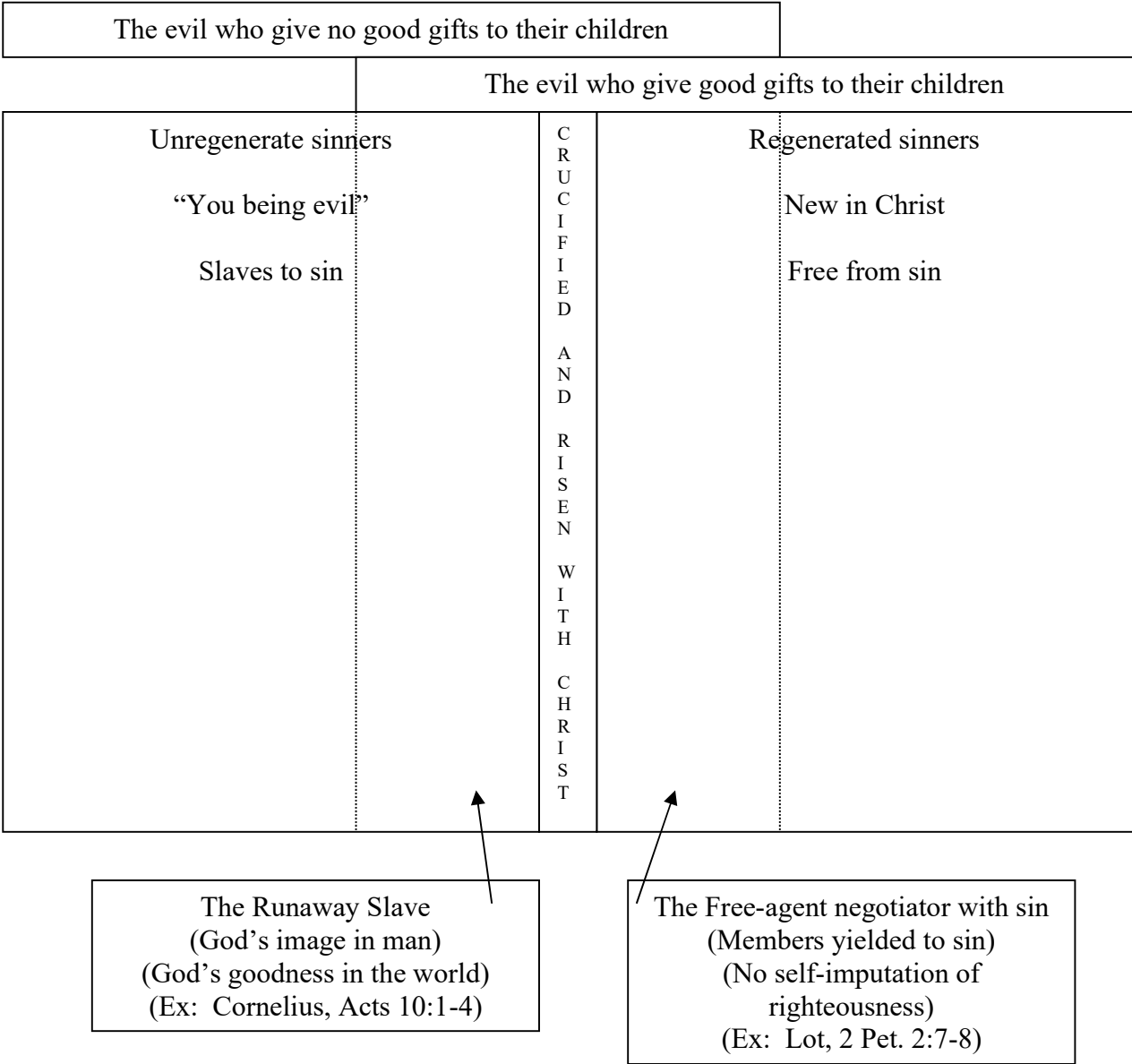
Answer: There are at least three arguments against antinomianism in this passage. First, "no condemnation" in verse 1 means that failure can no longer stop a believer from fulfilling the law of God. This ever-present second chance is the crux of what it means for the believer to no longer be under the law. Second, the purpose God gave the Holy Spirit to the believer at salvation was so that the requirements of the Law might be fulfilled in those who walk by the Spirit. The authority of the law has always been the same, and the need to fulfill the law has always been the same. For the believer, the power alone is different. Finally, subjection to the law of God is synonymous with pleasing God (vv. 7-8). We answer the question whether or not we are pleasing God by answering whether or not we are subjected to the law of God in our lives.

Application: Antinomianism disallows the important directives of Psalms 1:2 so critical to the spiritual growth of God's people: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." Paul not

only understood the truth of this verse, few appropriated it to their lives as effectively as he did. We need to do the same.

Notes:

So in what sense can a slave to sin do anything that is other than sin? An answer from Luke 11:13:



"New Life: The Relationship of the Justified to the Holy Spirit"

Romans 8:9-39

Lesson 8

Purpose:

No passage in the New Testament better explains the importance of the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit to the life of the believer than does the passage under consideration in this lesson. Your students will gain a familiarity with this important and powerful Person who lives within. Specifically, they will see how to advance beyond life in the flesh, failure in the face of suffering, and doubts regarding their eternal security.

In A Nutshell

Since Romans 5:1 we have been in a section of this letter in which Paul emphasizes sanctification, or the process of Christian growth. Understanding how things changed when we were saved is the key to spiritual growth. In lesson 5 we saw that our relationship to God has changed, and so we have a new hope. In lesson 6 we saw that our relationship to sin has changed, and so we have a new freedom. In lesson 7 we saw that our relationship to the law has changed, and so now we always have a second chance to obey it. Romans 8 is the last chapter in this section of the book, which is focused on how Christians grow. Here we find that our relationship to the Holy Spirit has changed, and this gives us a powerful new life. This chapter is equaled perhaps only by Galatians 4-5 in terms of its emphasis on the importance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is called Pneumatology. Romans 8 contains important Pneumatology, because it tells us how our new life in the Spirit unites us to Christ to give us victory over the flesh so we can grow, how it adopts us to Christ's sonship to give us a powerful new motivation so we can grow, and how it secures us for eternal glory in spite of our frailty and weakness, again, so we can grow.

Outline for the passage:

Lesson 8: New Life: The Relationship of the Justified to the Holy Spirit 8:9-39

The Spirit indwells to unite us with the life of Christ 8:9-13

The Spirit indwells to adopt us with the sonship of Christ 8:14-25

The Spirit indwells to secure us with gifts in Christ 8:26-39

Answers and Applications:

The Spirit indwells to unite us with the life of Christ

- Rom. 8:9 1. Verse 1 of this chapter spoke of the existence of believers as "in Christ Jesus." In addition, verse 10 tells us that Christ is in the believer. This is the two-sided blessing of union with Christ that believers enjoy—we are in Christ and He is in us. Verse 9 tells us how this happens. How is union with Christ accomplished in the life of the believer?

Answer: The Spirit of God must dwell in the believer in order for the believer to be in Christ and in order for Christ to be in the believer. All who are in Christ by faith have the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. There are no exceptions. All who belong to Christ have God's Spirit. The original language contains some important emphasis in this regard that can be missed as one reads the KJV: "You yourselves are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, since indeed the Spirit of God indwells you." Paul never asks professing Christians to pray to be indwelt by the Spirit; he insists that they already are.

Application: The verb Paul uses when he says "the Spirit of God *dwells* in you" is related to the Greek word for home or house. One commentator explains the force of this word as having "His home in your hearts, humbly welcomed into a continuous residence" (Moule, 173). Believers are the home of the Holy Spirit. We ought to keep ourselves clean, well-maintained, and nicely furnished for His habitation.

Notes: Note that Paul speaks of existence "in the Spirit" and "in Christ" as the opposite of existence "in the flesh." Sometimes when Paul uses the phrase "in the flesh," he describes an existence that is true of believers (Gal. 2:20, Phil. 1:22-24). He taught that Christian married couples would have trouble "in the flesh" (1 Cor. 7:28), and even that Christ was manifested "in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). But in two passages in the New Testament, Paul uses the word *flesh* to describe a condition of spiritual lifelessness (here in Rom. 8:8-11 and in Col. 2:11, where Paul uses the symbol of circumcision to discuss regeneration). No believer is "in the flesh" in this sense, because no believer is void of the Spirit or spiritually lifeless. According to these passages, there is an important sense in which a person is either "in the flesh" or "in the Spirit," never both, something in between, or something tertiary. "In the flesh" and "in the Spirit" are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive spiritual states. The indwelling ministry of the Spirit of God is not something that comes and goes; rather it is a foundational resource that we can always count on. This truth also has important implications for our understanding of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the Old Testament believer. The implication here is clearly that the Old Testament believer knew the indwelling ministry of the Spirit of God.

Rom. 8:9-10 **2. Jehovah Witnesses criticize orthodox Christians with the charge that the Bible never uses the word *Trinity*. This may be true, but that does not mean that the Bible never teaches the doctrine of the Trinity, that God is both one and in a different sense three. Paul uses some terms in verses 9-10 in an interchangeable way. What are those terms, and how do they teach the doctrine of the Trinity?**

Answer: In verse 9 "Spirit of God" and "Spirit of Christ" are interchangeable because they refer to the same Holy Spirit. This implies that "God" and "Christ" are one in the same. In verse 10 the idea that Christ is in you (v. 10) is interchangeable with the idea that the Holy Spirit dwells within you (v. 9), so there is a sense in which the presence of the Spirit is also the presence of Christ.

Application: B. B. Warfield, longtime Professor of Didactic and Polemical Theology at Princeton, compares the doctrine of the deity of Christ in Scripture with salt in the saltwater of the sea. From time to time, a salt crystal may form in the ocean much like the reader of the New Testament will from time to time come across a key proof text for the deity of Christ or the doctrine of the Trinity. More significant, however, is the everywhere present saltiness of the water, and everywhere the reader samples the New Testament he can taste the deity of Christ (*Lord of Glory*, pp. 1-2). It is important in our Bible study that we take time get a taste of the saltiness of the water, not merely search diligently for the allusive crystal. We want to grasp the tenor of Scripture, not merely memorize a few argument-supporting verses.

Notes:

Rom. 8:10-13 **3. Paul next describes the practical benefits that are available to us because the Holy Spirit calls us home. These benefits can be summarized as a new power to no longer live like spiritually dead people. Verse 10 tells us that in spite of the spiritual deadness of our bodies, we have spiritual life through the ministry of the Spirit who lives within us. The Holy Spirit is our spiritual life. Then v. 11 says that the Spirit is life-giving, and vv. 12-13 mentions that the Spirit is life-taking ("mortifying"). What does Paul mean when he describes the Spirit as both life-giving and life-taking, and how can these truths help us understand how to grow as Christians?**

Answer: The Spirit is life-giving in that he will give life to our mortal bodies in the resurrection (v. 11). The Spirit is life-taking in that He helps us to put to death the deeds, habits, and practices of our spiritually dead body (v. 13). That the Spirit shall give life to our mortal bodies in the resurrection is important to our spiritual growth because it informs us that we are not going to reach a nature of sinless perfection until then. A state of natural sinless perfection is not something that believers should expect to achieve on this side of their resurrection, and this understanding is important to their ability to keep on growing (Phil. 3:12-16). That the Spirit now must take life from our mortal bodies teaches us that we cannot do merely what feels good and expect to grow spiritually. Left to ourselves, the habits of our bodies will bring destruction and death. We need the power of the Spirit to be and do what we by nature would rather not be and do.

Application: This passage makes very clear that any advance beyond spiritual deadness in our lives must be attributed to the work of the Spirit of God. No good thing dwells in our bodies. Every hint of spiritual life we possess comes as a result of the Spirit's presence and work. He deserves all the credit for our spiritual success, and we must depend upon Him without exception to have any at all. In addition, verse 13 indicates that the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives battling our sinful nature is an important evidence of the reality of our spiritual life. A memory of a decision is not that which provides this evidence; rather, it is the efforts of the Spirit of God within to kill our sinful nature, which provides this evidence of our spiritual life. Where there is merely a memory of a decision but no struggle within against sin, there is likely no spiritual life.

Notes:

The Spirit indwells to adopt us with the sonship of Christ

Rom. 8:12, 14-15 **4. We often hear about efforts to understand what makes a person tick. Answering why we do what we do identifies our motivations. Verse 12 spoke of a sense of obligation. This too is a good definition of motivation. Where does the believer's sense of obligation come from according to vv. 14-15? How does this differ from the attitude of a slave?**

Answer: Our sense of obligation comes from the fact that we are God's adopted children. We feel an obligation to the Lord as a son would to his Father. This differs from the attitude of a slave because family love rather than fear of dismissal forms the foundation of the relationship (v. 15).

Application: Normal parents do not fire or sell off their offspring for failure to perform, the way one might treat a slave or an employee. God, of course, is a much better father than any human father (Luke 11:11-13). In our day of broken homes and fatherless kids, some new believers have trouble understanding the fact that as adopted sons our motivation for service is very different from that of a slave, and the consequences for failure are very different from those of a slave. We are the adopted sons of God. That relationship is all about love and security, not fear and threats.

Notes: Note that although there are many important scriptural parallels between the life of a bond-slave and the life of a Christian, slavery is a limited metaphor and does not apply in every sense. This is the nature of metaphors—there are areas of correspondence between the picture and the reality, and there are areas in which the correspondence is lacking. For instance, when John the Baptist called Herod a fox, he meant that Herod was scheming, not that he had a tail or that he ate rodents. Similarly, when the Bible calls believers slaves, it means that we have been purchased with a price, that we belong to the Lord, and that we ought to serve Him diligently. But our slavery to the Lord does not include the fearful motivation of a slave who must perform or be let go.

From The Honeycomb

krazō

“the Spirit of adoption by which we *cry out*: Abba! Father!”

The King James Version typically does not utilize exclamation points, but newer translations often do. In the passages below, the word krazō is used in Scripture to identify a quotation. We are told that someone is crying out, and then we are told what he said. Using a newer translation, what percentage of these quotations ends with an exclamation point? What does crying out “Abba, Father” with exclamation points say about the relationship we have with God the Father as His adopted children?

Matt. 8:29, 9:27, 14:26, 14:30, 15:22, 20:30, 20:31, 21:9, 27:23, Mark 3:11, 5:7, 9:24, 10:47, 10:48, 11:9, 15:13, 15:14, John 1:15, 7:28, 7:37, 12:44, Acts 7:60, 14:14, 19:28, 19:34, 21:28, 21:36, 23:6, Rom. 8:15, 9:27, Gal. 4:6, Rev. 6:10, 7:10, 14:15, 18:2, 18:18, 18:19.

Answer: In the NASB the quotation cited with krazō ends with an exclamation point in Matt. 9:27, 14:26, 14:30, 20:30, 20:31, 21:9, 27:23, Mark 3:11, 5:7, 10:47, 10:48, 11:9, 15:13, 15:14, Acts 7:60, 19:28, 19:34, 21:28, 21:36, 23:6, Rom. 8:15, Gal. 4:6, Rev. 18:2, 18:19. If my count is correct, this means that out of 37 quotations introduced with krazō, 24 of them end in an exclamation point, roughly 65%. What this says about our relationship with our Heavenly Father is that it ought to be very exciting to us. It ought to thrill us. It may be helpful for any fathers in the class to share an experience in which their children cried out to them with an exclamation point at the end of their cry. This author can remember coming home from a long day’s work to a house of young children who would shout at the top of their lungs, “Daddy!” They were excited to see me, and we ought to be excited about our relationship with God.

Rom. 8:16-25 **5. Sonship not only changes our motivation, it also changes our self-identity (v. 16, “we are God’s children”), our future (v. 17, “and if children, then heirs”), and our ability to suffer (vv. 18-25). Hope is the key to the last of these. What are some characteristics of the life lived with Bible hope?**

Answer: Living with Bible hope involves 1) an ability to live for tomorrow rather than today, the eternal rather than the temporary (v. 18), 2) an ability to live for that which cannot be seen, the invisible rather than the visible (v. 24), and 3) an ability to persevere with patience, to wait rather than quit (v. 25).

Application: In addition to the important personal application that this passage holds for us in regard to living with Bible hope in the face of suffering, it also holds important implications for a correct understanding of the doctrine of creation. Man and creation are said to have some things in common in this passage: groaning and sufferings that can be corrected only by God’s work of redemption. This fact precludes understanding groaning and suffering as a part of God’s creative process, the understanding required by theistic evolution and progressive creationism. The world needs redemption because man sinned, not because God created, so the groaning that calls for redemption must have started when man sinned, not prior to it as a part of God’s creative work.

Notes: It is eschatologically significant that verse 19 describes creation as awaiting the revelation of the *sons of God* (plural). This is, of course, the revelation of Jesus Christ, but not Jesus Christ alone. He will come with His saints, his adopted brothers and sisters (v. 15). Clearly, the groaning of creation does not end until the end of the tribulation period and the beginning of the millennium. Paul understood this future event as also involving the revelation of the sons of God. This implies that the saints of God have previously met the Lord in the air so that they can be revealed with Him. The sequence calls for a pre-, or at least a mid-, tribulational rapture, something prior to the second coming itself.

The Spirit indwells to secure us with gifts in Christ

Rom. 8:26-27 **6. This section contrasts the believer's weakness with the Holy Spirit's strength. How does Paul define the weakness of believers in this passage? How does he define the Holy Spirit's strength?**

Answer: Paul defines the weakness of believers as their inability to pray according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit's strength is His ability to intercede for us as we pray to help our prayers conform to the will of God.

Application: It is significant that the weakness of a believer can be defined in terms of his prayer life. When believers fail to pray, they not only fail in that they offer nothing in accordance with God's will, they also fail in that they provide the Holy Spirit no opportunity for His intercessory and powerful corrections of our prayers. Prayer is the key to spiritual strength through the Holy Spirit.

Notes:

Rom. 8:28-29 **7. The words "freely give" in verse 32 are actually one word in Greek, a verbal form of the noun *grace*. The doctrines of God's saving work of grace lie before us in this passage in all their glory, and each of these teachings contributes to the believer's sense of overwhelming security and victory in the saving love of Christ (v. 37, "we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us"). Simply put, in the battle between eternal security and insecure doubt, eternal security wins by a blowout. From vv. 29-30, list the doctrines of God's saving grace. Then from v. 29 identify their purpose, from vv. 28-30 the nature of their momentum, from v. 32 their prerequisite, and from the rhetorical questions of vv. 31-39 their powerful consequences.**

Answer:

God's saving work of grace	Verse:	Answer:
The works of saving grace listed:	vv. 29-30	foreknowledge; predestination; calling; justification; glorification
The purpose of this work:	v. 29	so that He might be the firstborn among many brethren; glorification of Christ and the salvation of sinners
The momentum of this work:	vv. 28-30	unstoppable – all things service the good of this plan and the chain it forms is unbreakable
The prerequisite for this work:	v. 32	the work of Christ – God's saving grace applies to a sinner when he has Christ; sinners are given these gifts "with Him"
The consequences of this work:	vv. 31-39	none can be against us; none can bring a charge against us; none can condemn us; none can sever Christ's love from us

Application: Libraries of theological works have been filled with the richness of the truth conveyed by these doctrines of grace. We can, of course, state only briefly the import of these doctrines as a part of this lesson.

The works: They begin with God's foreknowledge of people prior to the foundation of the world, a blessing these people share with Christ Himself (1 Pet. 1:2, 20). Next predestination to conformity to the image of Christ takes over. This outcome is not left to the vicissitudes of circumstance; rather, it is guaranteed by the eternal decree of God. All who are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son obtain that image by being: (1) called by His name (1:1; 9:24-26); (2) justified by His righteousness (3:25-26); (3) glorified by His nature (8:17).

The purpose: The purpose of this work involves both God's desire to glorify Christ ("that He might be the Firstborn") and His desire to save sinners ("among many brethren," v. 29). Saving souls is the way that God glorifies Christ.

The momentum: In terms of momentum, this work is simply unstoppable. The chain from foreknowledge to glorification is unbreakable. All things that affect the life of a believer work together in the service of this plan (v. 28). Believers are eternally secure because God is the one doing the saving work, and all whom He justifies He glorifies. Failure at sanctification, the process of Christian growth between justification and glorification, never forestalls glorification. One simply cannot lose justification.

The prerequisite: Union with the work of Christ is the prerequisite for enjoying any gracious gift from God (v. 32). They are all given with Him, and without Him a sinner does not have them. For this reason, Paul speaks of being chosen *in Him* prior to the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). We are foreknown because He is foreknown and because we are in Him (1 Pet. 1:2, 20). It is important to understand that this passage says nothing explicit regarding those who have not Christ.

The consequences: Finally, the consequences of all this are best summarized as a blowout in the contest between eternal security and insecure doubt. We find here no threat of purgatory, no possibility of a loss of salvation, no trembling pleading with intercessors that we may find kinder than Christ, nor even a hint that our own failures can somehow change all this. At issue here is what Christ has done, what God has done; the passage cares nothing about what we do or fail to do. Our only task is to be convinced of our security in the work of God's saving grace the way the apostle Paul was, and to possess unflinching confidence in the immutable love of Christ the way he did (vv. 38-39).

Notes:

The chain of grace found in verses 29-30 have a parallel in Ephesians 1. Foreknowledge parallels election (Eph. 1:4), predestination is mentioned in both passages (Eph. 1:5), being called by God's name is the blessing of adoption in Ephesians whereby we are accepted in the Beloved (Rom. 8:15-17; Eph. 1:5-6), justification has its parallel in redemption and forgiveness (Eph. 1:7), and glorification is called obtaining our inheritance there (Eph. 1:10-11).

"Understanding the Plight of the Lost"

Romans 9:1-33

Lesson 9

Purpose:

Your students ought to grow in their burden for the plight of the lost from this study of Romans 9. They will see the lost as God does. This is clearly how this chapter's content affected the apostle who wrote it. Sadly, common interpretations of Romans 9, although certainly within the purview of orthodox Christianity, often produce the opposite effect. Portions of this chapter can be understood as teaching that God is the author of evil, or that He has issued decrees of reprobation from eternity past. Neither of these understandings produces the heart of Paul the evangelist, largely because they fail to agree with the teaching of Paul the theologian in this chapter.

In A Nutshell

When it comes to understanding the gospel, the plight of the lost is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of gospel truth. Paul communicates the pain with which he writes Romans 9 (v. 2). He cared especially for lost Jews, so much of Romans 9 through 11 grapples with what happened to Israel in regard to God's plan of salvation. Their problem was unbelief; and the result of their unbelief was a lost condition. Paul's understanding of the plight of lost people in this chapter includes a great burden for them (vv. 1-5), a defense of God's Word (vv. 6-13), a defense of God's nature (vv. 14-23), and an indictment of the lost for their lack of faith (vv. 24-33).

Outline for the passage:

Lesson 9: Understanding the Plight of the Lost 9:1-33

Understand the plight of the lost with a great burden 9:1-5

Understand the plight of the lost without blaming God's Word 9:6-13

Understand the plight of the lost without blaming God's nature 9:14-23

Understand the plight of the lost in terms of a lack of faith in Christ 9:24-33

Answers and Applications:

Understand the plight of the lost with a great burden.

Rom.
9:1-3
Matt.
23:37
Ps.
126:5-6

1. It is likely that the apostle Paul was the greatest evangelist the church has ever known. He could also, perhaps, be described as her greatest theologian. Great theology and great evangelism go together in the life of the apostle in a way that can be difficult to find today. How did Paul's theology/understanding of the plight of the lost make him feel, and how did that feeling make him a great evangelist?

Answer: Paul describes his grief as great and his pain as unceasing in response to the plight of the lost (v.2). The parallel emotions expressed by Christ in His lament for Jerusalem show that Paul was Christ-like in this regard (Matt. 23:37). Paul's willingness to be accursed from Christ, if it could mean that his brothers would be saved, and Christ's tender metaphor of the hen gathering her chicks expose the hearts of two exemplary soul winners, who had a great emotional burden for the needs of lost people.

Application: Sowing and reaping is a common New Testament metaphor for gospel preaching. Christ told the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13:3-9), and He spoke of the lost world as a field white unto harvest (Matt. 9:37-38, John 4:35). The apostle Paul described his gospel preaching as planting, watering, and watching God make things grow (1 Cor. 3:5-9). So it is difficult to conclude that neither would have seen any lessons for the gospel preacher in the poetry of the Psalmist about sowing and reaping in Ps. 126:5-6. This passage describes the process required to repopulate the land of Palestine after the captivity, and it provides a model for populating the kingdom of Christ. The song counsels that in order to reap sheaves with joy, one must be willing to sow in sorrow and weep. Without a burden for souls, the burden carried by the Lord Jesus and Paul, our harvest will be a weak one. Any conclusions reached from the theology of Romans 9 that extinguish a biblical burden for souls is a misinterpretation of Paul's teaching here.

Notes:

Interesting Insight!

Re: Ps. 126:6-7

"As by the sowing we are to understand everything that each individual contributes towards the building up of the kingdom of God, so by the sheaves, the wholesome fruit which, by God bestowing His blessing upon it beyond our prayer and comprehension, springs up from it" [Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 5:291].

Rom. 9:3, 5 **2. Give three proofs from this passage that Paul affirmed the deity of Jesus Christ.**

Answer: (1) In verse 3 Paul defines being accursed to eternal punishment (lit., "anathema") as being accursed from Christ. The presence of Christ is what makes heaven heaven. Without Christ there is no heaven. (2) Christ is described as the one who is "over all" in verse 5. (3) Also in verse 5, Paul calls Jesus Christ "God blessed forever."

Application: Some more liberal modern translations have attempted to eliminate Paul's frank reference to Christ as God in verse 5 (including the *Revised Standard Version* [although the NRSV changes this], the *New English Bible*, and *Today's English Version* [also known as the *Good News Translation*]). These handle the last phrase of verse 5 in a way similar to the *New World Translation* of the Jehovah Witnesses: "to whom the forefathers belong and from whom the Christ [sprang] according to the flesh: God, who is over all, [be] blessed forever. Amen." Note the addition of the "be" in parentheses before "blessed" in the last phrase of the verse. This is an attempt to keep the verse from saying that Christ is "God blessed forever." For some good technical reasons noted below, this is a poor approach to the Greek involved. But it is also important to understand that no translation of the Bible, no matter how biased, is able to escape the frank implications of verse 3 in regard to the deity of Christ, or the clear statement in verse 5 that Christ is over all (note the *New World Translation* on v. 5 above). Here is the Jehovah Witnesses' Bible on verse 3: "For I could wish that I myself were separated as the cursed one from the Christ in behalf of my brothers, my relatives according to the flesh." The Jehovah Witness Bible teaches here that Christ is what makes heaven heaven. To be excluded from heaven is to be excluded from Him. This is a good example of what I like to call the ubiquitous testimony of Scripture to the deity of Christ. Just as no swimmer can escape the saltiness of ocean water, so also no translation, no matter how biased against the idea, can escape the Bible's teaching that Christ is God. The doctrine is dispersed throughout its pages, not merely isolated in some

proof texts that can be retranslated to fit one's misconceptions. We need to know more of the truth of our Bibles than quick proof texts can provide on their own.

Notes: Douglas Moo provides an excellent summary of the translation issues related to verse 5 (*The Epistle to the Romans*, 565-568). He lists the following points for understanding "God blessed forever" as a reference to Christ: (1) "the one who is" refers to Christ; (2) the doxologies of Paul normally relate to the preceding context; (3) we would expect to find the word "blessed" prior to "God" in the phrase "God [be] blessed forever," but it is after; (4) the affirmation of Christ's deity parallels the antithetical phrase "according to the flesh."

Rom. 9:3-5 **3. Part of the tragedy of the plight of the lost people is that they have rejected opportunities to escape this plight. List these opportunities or privileges of Israel, and describe how one or more of them should have worked to correct their lost condition.**

Answer:

The Privilege of Israelites:	How the privilege should have worked to bring Israel to Christ:
Kinship with Paul (v. 3)	Paul's conversion certainly should have communicated the reality of the truth of the gospel to his family and countrymen. None of the Jews of Paul's day would have lacked powerful exposure to the testimony of this great evangelist.
The Adoption as sons (the Exodus) (v. 4).	God had illustrated the truth of adoption in a special way for Israel in their Exodus from Egypt. Remember that the opposite of the sonship of adoption is the bondage of slavery, so adoption is the positive side of redemption (Rom. 8:14-15, 23). In the Exodus event redemption from slavery and adoption as sons were illustrated in a monumental way (Exod. 4:22-23). Israelites should have responded to these truths in a personal way.
The Glory (the pillar of fire and cloud) (v.4).	God revealed Himself as real, as one who was with the Israelites and interested in them, as their Protector by day and their Guide by night, and as the proper object of their worship meeting them at the tabernacle (Exod. 13:21-22, 14:24, 33:9-10). Remember that the goodness of God leads men to repentance (Acts 17:27; Rom. 2:4). These things ought to have led the Israelites to repentance.
The covenants (v. 4).	These covenants would have included, undoubtedly, the new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). The need for the law of God written upon the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit was a doctrine that Nicodemus was expected to know (John 3:10). The new covenant would have been an important source of this truth for him (Ezek. 36:25-28).
The giving of the law (v. 4)	Elsewhere Paul calls the law a schoolmaster that brings us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). It was designed that way for Israel.
The tabernacle/temple rituals ("service of God," v. 4)	Every aspect of tabernacle and temple worship was designed to teach the Israelite about his need for salvation through the cleansing work of God and the propitiating work of sacrifice. David understood this symbolism when he prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51:7).
The promises (v. 4)	Different from "covenants," these promises likely include the many prophecies of the coming of the Messiah from Gen. 3:15 to Dan. 9:24-27. The first passage speaks of the destruction of Satan's seed by the Messiah, and the second passage speaks of the death of the Messiah which would bring an end to sin, make atonement for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. The Daniel passage even pinpointed the timing of all this, yet most in Israel failed to benefit from these insights.
The fathers (v. 5)	God intended that the lives of the fathers would function as an example to those who follow them, whether good or bad (1 Cor. 10:11). To fail to believe is to repeat the mistakes of the past, and to fail to have the righteousness that comes by the faith of Abraham and David (Rom. 4:1-8)
The Christ (v. 5)	Jesus Christ had lived among Israel. He had been sent to minister in a special way to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10:6, 15:24).

Application: First, the Bible is clear that sinners are without excuse (Rom. 3:19). We need to avoid a perspective that makes excuses for the plight of the sinner (Rom. 1:20, 2:1). If a sinner fails to respond to the goodness of

God in repentance (Rom. 2:4), it is never because there has not been enough goodness of God. God was certainly good to Israel, and yet in spite of all these gifts of God, they stood accursed from Christ, their Messiah. God has been good to America and the rest of mankind as well.

Second, it is no mere coincidence that Paul had a special burden for the Jews. He felt this way because they were his kinship. We ought to have a special sense of calling to those among our family members, our townsmen, and countrymen who need the Lord.

Notes: Some non-dispensational interpreters suggest that Paul's reference here to "covenants" does not include the new covenant of Jeremiah (see Moo, 563). They prefer to reserve that as belonging strictly to the church for fulfillment. It is clear from Jeremiah's prophecy, however, that this covenant, like the others, was made with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer. 31:27, 31). A detailed examination of the relevance of the new covenant to the church is beyond the scope of this study. Here it is enough to understand that, though its promised blessings are yet future in terms of fulfillment as is the case with other covenants, the truths the new covenant teaches about salvation are timeless and should have been instructive to Israelites in Paul's day.

Understand the plight of the lost without blaming God's Word.

Rom. 9:6-13
Ps. 131:1-3

4. Here Paul defends the word of God by offering a correct interpretation of it (v. 6b). He says that it has not failed, because he believed that it could not fail (v. 6a). He trusted its historical detail and statements of fact (vv. 7, 9, 12). Finally, he summarizes the section with a final quotation introduced by the phrase, "As it is written" (v. 13). What Old Testament verse does Paul quote there, and what principle can we glean from his example about how to interpret our Bibles? In addition, list some principles of Bible study from Ps. 131.

Answer: Paul's point here is that God's promises to Israel will still be fulfilled with elect (eschatological) Israel. The passage Paul uses to summarize his interpretation of Scripture in this section is from Genesis and Mal. 1:2-3 (vv. 7, 9, 12 are from Genesis; v. 13 is from Malachi). Paul believed that our Bibles contain a marvelous continuity, which precludes any contradiction appearing from Genesis to Malachi, because he believed that it was ultimately the product of a single Author, the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16). The continuity of Scripture means that our interpretation of a passage must agree with what the Bible says elsewhere, or else our interpretation of that passage needs correcting. This is called the analogy of Scripture principle of Bible interpretation. We compare Scripture with Scripture to understand what it means; Scripture interprets Scripture.

Application: When we study Romans 9 or the doctrines of grace in general, we need to be careful not to ignore some passages of Scripture that do not always agree with our interpretation of these doctrines. The best way to do this is to remember that the Bible is a revelation of God, and that God is bigger than we are. Ps. 131 offers some critical advice to those who study the doctrines of salvation. It says there that the Bible student must be humble, must not exercise himself in things that are too great for him to understand, and must trust the Lord's word as a weaned child would trust his mother. This is sound advice for the motivated theologian.

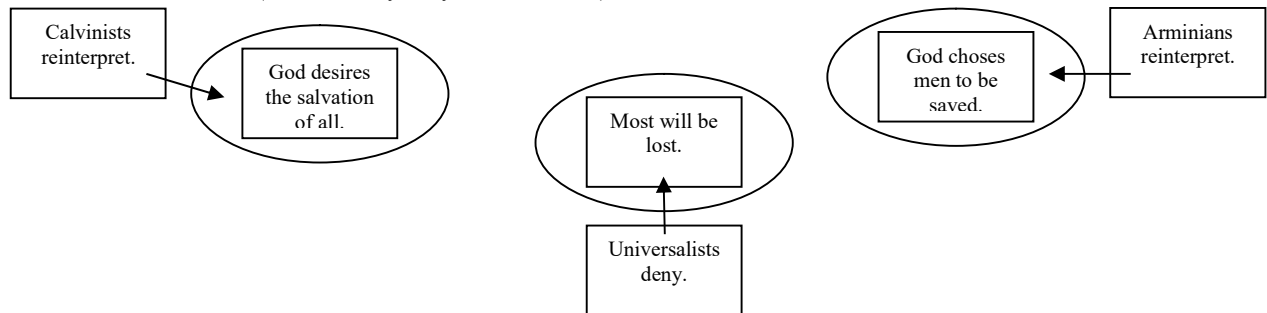
Notes: When it comes to our understanding of the doctrines of grace, the analogy of Scripture principle sometimes suffers. It is tempting to ignore or contort some clear statements of Scriptures in favor of others when we do not understand exactly how these statements fit together. The passages that touch on God's work of salvation may be categorized generally into three groups that are difficult to reconcile in this way.

First, the Bible states plainly that God desires the salvation of all mankind. We noted earlier the burden for sinners the Lord Jesus shared with Paul (Matt. 27:37). Many passages indicate that God desires the salvation of all and that Jesus died for all (Isa. 53:6, John 3:16, Rom. 5:15-21, 1 Cor. 15:3, 1 Tim. 2:4, 1 John 2:2, 2 Pet. 2:1, 3:9). Some seek to change the plain meanings of these verses by postulating some sense in which they can say "all" and "world" without meaning everyone, or "will" and "desire" without referring to the sovereign will of God. These attempts are generally required too often and consequently unconvincing.

Second, the Bible states plainly that God chooses men to be saved prior to the foundation of the world based on His foreknowledge of them (Rom. 8:29-30). Some have said that God foreknew the response someone would have to the gospel and on the basis of the knowledge of this response made His choice. This idea turns the import of the doctrine on its head and fails to account for important statements of Scripture (God foresaw that Sodom and Gomorrah would respond, yet they were not chosen [Matt. 11:20-24]). It also misunderstands the personal nature of foreknowledge (1 Pet. 1:20 speaks of God's relationship to Christ in these terms).

Third, the Bible states plainly that most people will not be saved (Matt. 7:13-14). Attempts to advocate the universal salvation of all men deny the Scripture and postulate a false gospel outside the boundaries of orthodox soteriology (Eph. 5:5-7).

Three watermelons (we can carry only two at a time):



Now any two of these three teaching can be maintained with little humility or effort. If God does not really desire the salvation of all, it is easy to see how He chooses men to be saved and how most are not saved. If God does not really choose men to be saved, it is easy to see how God desires the salvation of all and most will not be saved. If all will be saved, it is easy to see how that God desires the salvation of all and chooses people to be saved. Yet “easy,” in each of these cases, produces only heresy and the denial of important Scriptures. The first is the error of hyper-Calvinism, the second is the error of hyper-Arminianism, and the last is the apostasy of universalism. The better approach is to admit that all three teachings are true in their plain sense and that the reconciliation of them is “unsearchable and past finding out” (Rom. 11:33). If the inspired apostle had to describe God’s work of salvation in these terms, is it any wonder that we must as well?

**Rom.
9:6-13**

5. Paul shows that the word of God has not failed by pointing out two ways in which one does not become a child of God. God’s word has never taught that someone is saved by these two things. He couples the examples of Abraham and Jacob to explain the first of these, and then the examples of Jacob and Esau to explain the second of these. According to these examples, describe two ways one does not become the child of God?

Answer: (1) Paul uses Israel (Jacob) and Abraham to show that one does not become a child of God through his parentage or heritage (v. 8). (2) Paul uses Jacob and Esau to show that one does not become a child of God through his works (v. 11). In regard to the first issue, the difference between flesh and believing a promise is essential. In regard to the second issue, the difference between him who works and Him who calls is essential. Note, however, that this “effectual calling” of Jacob went to Rebecca. “Calling” is God’s sovereign pronouncement about the believer’s status.

Application: God gave Abraham a supernatural promise of a blessed offspring through Sarah as opposed to the offspring that came by merely natural means through Hagar, and this history demonstrates the truth that those who believe God’s supernatural promise of salvation are saved, not those who happen to trace their lineage back to the patriarchs. We are not saved by our heritage or lineage. We need personal faith in God’s salvation promises. In addition, God chose the nation of Israel over Edom (see Note below) as the focus of his revelatory work among men before either Jacob or Esau were born, and this history reveals the truth that salvation depends upon God’s gracious choice, not on the merits of the works of man. So the two antitheses of salvation by faith in God’s promise and by God’s choice are salvation by ethnic heritage and salvation by works. This discussion does not see salvation by faith in God’s promise as antithetical in any way to salvation by God’s choice. To make this the issue is to misunderstand Paul. Note the differences highlighted by the chart below between Paul’s argument in Rom. 9:6-13, and today’s theological argument about God’s sovereignty in salvation.

Paul's argument in Rom. 9:6-13:	Today's theological argument:
<p>Salvation is by faith in God's promises (vv. 8-9) and Salvation is by God's gracious choice (vv. 11-12)</p> <p>VS.</p> <p>Salvation is by family heritage (vv. 8-9) and Salvation is by works (vv. 11-12)</p>	<p>Salvation is by faith in God's promises ("free will"); faith is necessary to election</p> <p>VS.</p> <p>Salvation is by God's gracious choice; election is necessary to faith</p>

Notes: The passage Paul quotes from Malachi 1:2-3 clearly refers to the nations of Israel and Edom, not specifically the individuals Jacob/Israel and Esau. In addition, neither Malachi nor Paul means to say that every individual in the nation of Israel is chosen for salvation, and that every individual in Edom is rejected in reprobation. What the passage teaches is that the nation of Israel was chosen to receive the privileges of God's special revelatory work on earth, the items mentioned in 9:4-5, and Edom was not. Therefore, the older would serve the younger, but this service could have involved benefitting from the blessing bestowed upon Israel had not the Edomites become restless and rebellious (Gen. 27:39-40). Note that the prophecy of Amos speaks of a remnant of Edom as representatives of a remnant among all Gentile nations that would be called by the name of the Lord (Amos 9:12). "Esau have I hated" does not teach the reprobation from eternity past of all Edomites because a remnant are saved. Neither does "Jacob have I loved" teach the predestination unto salvation from eternity past of all Israelites. This would contradict Paul's main point in this passage.

Understand the plight of the lost without blaming God's nature.

**Rom.
9:14-24**

6. Having defended God's word in the face of the plight of the lost, Paul moves on to a defense of the justice of God. He gives three reasons why God's nature should not be blamed as we contemplate the sad state of the lost. Fill in the blanks below from the passages indicated:

- (1) God's nature is not to be blamed because He is the source of _____ and _____ (9:14-16).
- (2) God's nature is not to be blamed because He hardens sinners in order to _____ His name (9:17-18).
- (3) God's nature is not to be blamed because He is the _____ and His creation the _____ (9:19-23).

Answer: (1) God's nature is not to be blamed because He is the source of mercy and compassion (9:14-16).
 (2) God's nature is not to be blamed because He hardens sinners in order to proclaim His name (9:17-18).
 (3) God's nature is not to be blamed because He is the Potter and His creation the clay (9:19-23).

Application: (1) Paul describes God as the God who has mercy. He cannot be unjust because He is merciful and compassionate. He is sovereign over the expressions of his mercy and compassion, but never unjust. Were he unjust, He could not be truly merciful and compassionate, for these things are incompatible with injustice. We misunderstand God if we see Him as the source of the plight of the sinner rather than the source of the mercy and compassion that can lift the sinner out of his plight.

(2) While it is true that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, He did so only after explaining to this pagan king precisely why He had raised him up to a position of such power (Rom. 9:17, Exod. 9:16). God's purpose in Pharaoh's exaltation was that His name would be proclaimed throughout the earth. Clearly, the proclamation of God's name is truly an act of God's mercy among men that they might know Him and repent of their sins. Pharaoh rejected God's messenger and so refused to cooperate with God's purpose for raising him up (Exod. 5:2). In fact, God hardened Pharaoh's heart by showing mercy and relieving the plagues, actions that caused Pharaoh to harden his own heart (Exod. 8:15, 8:31-32, 9:34-35). God's purpose of proclaiming his name was going to happen, even if He had to harden Pharaoh's heart with acts of mercy to do it.

(3) The point of connection between the potter's relationship to clay and God's relationship to us is that God made us and has exercised the right to make us the way He wants. What Paul finds objectionable is actually that in this case, the clay answers back to God (9:20). Scripture sees the clay not as a metaphor for a deterministic existence. Rather, Jeremiah calls the clay to repentance (Jer. 18:6). The Potter has chosen to make us in such a way that we can resist His will and answer back to Him, but this does not mean that we have the right to do so. Paul further describes the designs of the Potter in terms of one lump and two vessels. Two kinds of vessels are made out of the same lump of clay. Note the contrasts in the chart below regarding the nature, treatment, description, and purpose of these vessels:

The Potter and His Clay – Romans 9		
Material used:	The same one lump (v. 21)	
Nature of the vessels:	Common vessels of wrath (v. 21-22)	Honorable vessels of mercy (v. 21, 23)
Description of the vessels:	Prepared for destruction (v. 22)	Prepared by God beforehand for glory (v. 23)
Treatment of the vessels:	Endure with patience (v. 22, an act of mercy and compassion)	Make known the riches of His glory (v. 23, an act of mercy and compassion)
Purpose for treating the vessels in this manner	In order to make vessels of mercy (v. 23)	

The chart highlights some important truths that sometimes go unnoticed when reading about the Potter and His clay in Romans 9. First, Paul emphasizes that the same lump is used in both vessels. There is a kind of equitable starting point. Second, the description “God prepared beforehand” applies to vessels of mercy, but not vessels of wrath. Vessels of mercy enjoy the benefit of eternal predestination, but Paul nowhere credits God with the predetermined preparation of lost people in this way (see the note below). Third, God's work with each kind of vessel, although appropriate to the differences of each, is in both cases truly an act of mercy and compassion. He endures vessels of wrath with patience, an act of mercy and compassion. Finally, Paul tells us of a specific purpose for God's patience with vessels of wrath. It is so that vessels of mercy might be produced. Paul teaches elsewhere that every child of God's mercy was once a child of God's wrath (Eph. 2:3). What is a child in Ephesians 2 is a vessel in Romans 9. This fact precludes understanding vessels of wrath as predetermined by the Potter to be doomed to eternal wrath. On the contrary, Paul is teaching that God made us vessels of wrath in such a way that we can respond to his patient endurance and the revelation of his glory, becoming prepared beforehand for glory, a vessel of mercy. He is longsuffering to vessels of wrath because He does not want any of them to perish (2 Pet. 2:9).

Notes:

Another who fails to find a decree of reprobation from eternity past in the Scriptures is the 19th century Brethren revivalist and author, C. H. Mackintosh. After referencing Rom. 9:22-23 in his commentary on Genesis 29, he footnotes the following exposition of these verses:

“It is deeply interesting to the spiritual mind to mark how sedulously the Spirit of God, in Romans ix, and indeed throughout all scripture, guards against the horrid inference which the human mind draws from the doctrine of God's election. When He speaks of ‘vessels of wrath,’ He simply says, ‘fitted to destruction;’ He does not say that God ‘fitted’ them. Whereas, on the other hand, when He refers to ‘the vessels of mercy,’ He says, ‘whom *He* had afore prepared unto glory.’ This is most marked.

“If my reader will turn for a moment to Matthew xxv. 34-41, he will find another striking and beautiful instance of the same thing.

“When the King addresses those on His right hand, He says, ‘Come, ye *blessed of My Father*, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you* from the foundation of the world.’ (Verse 34). But when He addresses those on His left, he says, ‘Depart from Me, ye cursed.’ He does not say, Cursed of My Father. And further, He says, “Into everlasting fire, prepared [not for *you*, but] for the devil and his angels.’ (Verse 41).

“In a word, then, it is plain that God has ‘prepared’ a kingdom of glory, and ‘vessels of mercy’ to inherit that kingdom; but He has not prepared ‘everlasting fire’ for men, but for ‘the devil and his angels;’ nor has He fitted the ‘vessels of wrath,’ but they have fitted themselves.

“The Word of God as clearly establishes ‘*election*’ as it sedulously guards against ‘*reprobation*.’ Every one who finds himself in heaven will have to thank God for it, and every one that finds himself in hell will have to thank himself” (emphasis his) [*Notes on the Book of Genesis* (1880; reprint, New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1959), 291.]

Understand the plight of the lost in terms of a lack of faith in Christ.

**Rom.
9:25-33**

7. Paul finally answers the “Why?” of the plight of the lost. Why are so many unsaved? After Paul explains that Scripture clearly predicted both the salvation of many Gentiles, as well as a limited number of Jews (vv. 25-29), he tells us precisely why so many are lost. What is Paul’s answer (vv. 30-33)?

Answer: They pursue righteousness by works rather than by faith (vv. 30-31. They reject Christ, stumbling over Him rather than accepting His work in their behalf (vv. 32-33).

Application: This is the only correct answer for why a person is lost. If a man or woman is lost it is because they have rejected Christ through unbelief. It is not because the word of God has failed, nor is it because the nature of God is unjust. Rather, it is because the promise, the mercy, the patience, the compassion, and the riches of the God who saves have been ultimately rejected.

Notes: In conclusion, the author would like to recommend five axioms of soteriology that will help to encourage balance in regard to one’s teaching of this important doctrine: (1) Bible soteriology is gospel—good news that ought to be published to everyone; (2) Bible soteriology is mysterious—it is past finding out; (3) according to Bible soteriology, if a man is saved it is because of the sovereign power of God’s mercy; (4) according to Bible soteriology, if a man is lost it is because of his unbelief and rejection of Christ; (5) according to Bible soteriology, most of mankind will not be saved. A helpful exercise would be that of asking the students to come up with, one at a time, a passage that supports each of these clear axioms.

"Addressing the Plight of the Lost"

Romans 10:1-21

Lesson 10

Purpose:

Your students will come to the conviction that it is God's will that we do something about the plight of the lost. They will be encouraged to remain faithful in their witness in spite of sometimes discouraging results.

In A Nutshell

Paul has spent some time giving his readers an understanding of the plight of the lost in chapter 9. With chapter 10 his instruction progresses to the need to do something about it. This need was more than academic for Paul; it was his reason for living. It needs to be ours as well. Yet in the face of this overwhelming need, discouragement can mount. Paul offers his fellow evangelists encouragement in this passage. Few have captured the essence of Romans 10 as succinctly and well as Handley Moule: "The proclamation might be universal; but were not the results partial, even when a Paul, a Barnabas, a Peter, was the missionary? Everywhere some faith; but everywhere more hostility, and still more indifference! Could this, after all, be the main track of the divine purposes—these often ineffectual excursions of the 'fair feet' of the messengers of an eternal peace? Ah, that objection must have offered no mere logical difficulty to St. Paul; it must have pierced his heart" [*The Epistle to the Romans* (1958; reprint, Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2001), 221]. Paul encourages believers to do something about the plight of the lost by understanding the need, understanding the solution, delivering the solution, and holding sinners responsible.

Outline for the passage:

Lesson 10: Addressing the Plight of the Lost 10:1-21

Address their plight with an understanding of their need 10:1-4

Address their plight with an understanding of the solution 10:5-13

Address their plight by delivering the solution 10:14-17

Address their plight by holding them responsible 10:18-21

Answers and Applications:

Address their plight with an understanding of their need

Rom.
10:1-4

1. Paul makes clear at the outset that the need of sinners is first a prayer need (v. 1). Charles Hodge correctly asserts: "If we really desire the salvation of men, we shall pray for it" [*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (1864; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 343]. We need to understand the importance of praying for lost souls. Secondly, the need of sinners involves a grave misunderstanding about the nature of righteousness. Describe this misunderstanding by completing the chart below:

Answer:

Topic misunderstood and verse:	The sinners' view:	God's truth:
v. 2 – the importance of religious zeal to righteousness	Righteousness is about sincerity and zeal.	Righteousness requires a zeal for a full understanding of the truth.
v. 3 – the source of righteousness	himself	God
v. 3 – the method of obtaining righteousness	going about to establish	submit
v. 4 – the purpose of God's law when it comes to righteousness	a guide for personal living (ex., keep the Ten Commandments)	a revelation of the person and work of Jesus Christ (end = goal, a school master that brings to Christ)

Application: When Paul speaks of the sinners' misunderstanding of the importance of zeal or sincerity, he explains that they do not have a zeal for a full understanding of truth. The word Paul uses, when he says "but not according to knowledge (epignōsis)," is an intensive form of the ordinary word for knowledge (gnōsis). He is saying that their zeal for God lacks a complete understanding of the details of truth. Those who advocate religious zeal/sincerity as more important than religious truth have fallen into the error of mysticism in a practical sense. This age-old error is still very popular today. On August 29, 2004, the *Greenville News* carried a front-page article entitled, "More people seeking a deeper spiritual life" by Ron Barnett. Barnett interviewed a man named Lance Renault for the article, which stated in part: "Lance Renault, chief program officer for Greenville-based American Leprosy Missions, found his way as a member of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis, a religious order of the Episcopal Church. In it, members take vows and follow a rule of life but continue to work regular jobs and live with their families. He went through a 2½-year formation period that involved writing monthly reports on his progress in living his rule, a nine-point guideline that includes prayer, study and work. 'For me, it was a greater appreciation for simplicity in my life and a growing need to look for God's presence every day throughout the day,' he said. The process also changed his way of thinking about religion. 'Too often we put the correctness of theology as we understand it before the love,' he said. 'I learned to get that straightened out through my spiritual formation.'" Clearly, the idea here is that sincere zeal or love is the key and that the sinner does not need to get too bogged down in the details of theology or truth. Pauline doctrine states the opposite. The need of the sinner is not more sincerity; his need is too much ignorance of the details of truth. Note also that Paul uses the word "submit" when he describes the true method of obtaining God's righteousness. See the *Interesting Insight!* section below for one commentators comparison of this principle to the faith of a person going under the knife of a surgeon.

Notes:***Interesting Insight!***

Re: "they. . .have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3)

"They *aspired* to acceptance. God commanded them *submit* to it. In their view, it was a matter of attainment—an ascent to a difficult height where the climber might glory in his success. As God presented it, it was a matter of surrender—as when a patient places himself helpless in a master-healer's hands for a recovery which will be due to those hands alone" [Moule, 214].

Address their plight with an understanding of the solution

- Rom. 10:5-7 2. Our English translations communicate a sharp contrast between v. 5 and vv. 6-7 by translating the first word of v. 6 with the contrasting conjunction *But*. In Greek, however, the word Paul chooses at the beginning of v. 6 normally communicates a continuation of thought and is most often translated *and (de)*. Paul does not use the normal word for a sharp contrast (*alla*). If we have a contrast between verse 5 and verses 6-7, what specifically is being contrasted? And if we translate the first word of verse 6 as *and* rather than *but*, how might this affect our understanding of Paul's meaning?
- Lev. 18:5
- Deut. 30:11-14

Answer: There seems to be an immediately apparent contrast between *righteousness of the law* and *righteousness of faith* in Rom. 10:5-7. A closer look, however, suggests a problem with this conclusion. Verse 6 clearly states that the righteousness of faith *speaks*. So if this is part of a contrast, we must look not for the opposite of the righteousness of faith in v. 5, but rather for the opposite of the righteousness of faith *speaking*. The verse-five contrast to the righteousness of faith speaking would have to be either *Moses writes* or *a man who practices the law shall live by it*. Moses still speaks in vv. 6-7, so this cannot be the intended contrast.

Seeing a contrast between *a man who practices the law shall live by it* (v. 5) and *the righteousness of faith speaks* (v. 6) is somewhat problematic because both ultimately refer to the same righteousness of God. Verse 3 gave us the contrast between *self-righteousness* and *the righteousness of God*. Both the righteousness described by Lev. 18:5 and the righteousness described by Deut. 30:11-14 belong on the *righteousness of God* side of that contrast. If we say that Lev. 18:5 belongs on the self-righteousness side of this contrast, we run into a problem because Moses wrote Lev. 18:5. Now there is Mosaic authority for establishing your own righteousness.

A better approach to the passage sees Paul drawing a comparison between the righteousness revealed in the law and the righteousness obtained by faith. He is showing how these are one and the same. His point is that the righteousness of the law in Lev. 18:5 and the righteousness of faith in Deut. 30:11-14 both involve a changed life. Lev. 18:5 teaches that only those who practice the law have life (another way of saying that faith without works is dead, Jam. 2:17), and Deut. 30:11-14 teaches that practicing the law happens when it is internalized through faith.

Application: Paul has elaborated on the contrast he began with. Our chart can be expanded to reflect these additions as follows:

Topic misunderstood and verse:	The sinners' righteousness:	The righteousness of God:
v. 2 – the importance of religious zeal to righteousness	Righteousness is about sincerity and zeal.	Righteousness requires a zeal for a full understanding of the truth.
v. 3 – the source of righteousness	himself	God
v. 3 – the method of obtaining righteousness	going about to establish	submit
v. 4 – the purpose of God's law when it comes to righteousness	a guide for personal living (ex., keep the Ten Commandments)	a revelation of the person and work of Jesus Christ
vv. 5-7 – the one who makes it possible	self – scale the heavens and plunge the depths if necessary	Christ – leave the ivory palaces, become a man, die, and rise again
vv. 5-7 – Scriptural support	none	Lev. 18:5 – faith without works is dead; Deut. 30:11-14 – the key to works is an internalized law through true faith in the accomplishments of Christ.

Notes: The best argument against the interpretation offered here and in favor of a sharp contrast between v. 5 and vv. 6-7 is the fact that Paul creates a sharp contrast with similar phraseology in Phil. 3:9. Two details, however, indicate that the discussion of Phil. 3:9 is not an exact parallel to that of Rom. 10:5-7. (1) Paul uses *ἄλλα* rather than *δέ* in Phil. 3:9, clearly emphasizing his desire for a sharp contrast there in a way he does not in Rom. 10:6. (2) The contrast Paul discusses in Phil. 3:9 is not “righteousness of the law” vs. “righteousness of faith,” but “*my own* righteousness of the law” vs. “righteousness of faith.” Moses never wrote any instruction about how to obtain “*one's own* righteousness of the law” (Rom. 10:5). He wrote about how to obtain “*God's* righteousness of the law.” The view that sees a parallel contrast in Phil. 3:9 must conclude that Rom. 10:5 claims that Moses wrote about establishing *one's own* righteousness in Lev. 18:5. To the contrary, Paul uses Lev. 18:5 to explain an aspect of God's righteousness.

Rom. 10:4-7 3. The meaning of Paul’s description of Christ as the end of the law (v. 4) has divided commentators between two primary interpretations. (1) Some understand “the end of the law” to mean that the law’s goal or purpose is Christ or the revelation of the person and work of Christ. (2) Others understand from this verse that Christ has brought an end to the applicability or jurisdiction of the law by fulfilling it. Paul points to the correct understanding in his continued discussion of the law and Christ in verses 5-7. Which interpretation do you believe to be correct? Why?

John 5:39

Col. 2:17

Answer: The first view is likely correct in light of Paul’s demonstration of the way in which the Deuteronomy passage points to the work of Christ. Deuteronomy clearly teaches that obtaining the righteousness of God is a feat that calls for no heroics on the part of the sinner. This is because God’s righteousness is a gift of God’s grace that changes the life and supernaturally internalizes God’s law. Paul uses the passage to remind his readers that the heroics spoken of by Moses, which the sinner could not do, actually had to be done by Christ. He accomplished these heroics of salvation with His incarnation and His resurrection.

Application: Both the Bible and our salvation are all about the person and work of Jesus Christ (John 5:39). The law still functions with the same purpose today: reveal the person and work of our Savior (Col. 2:17). The difference between having your own righteousness from the law and having the righteousness of God from the law is whether or not you find Jesus Christ in the law. A Christless law yields self-righteousness. A law full of Christ yields the righteousness of God, the true righteousness of the law which is by faith, faith that results in the law written on the heart and practiced in the life. How impoverishing the view is that sees the jurisdiction and applicability of the law as gone in our day. Antinomianism is a real danger in this regard.

Notes: Views that understand v. 4 as a termination of the law in some sense by the coming of Christ have a difficult time accounting for the salvation of OT believers and the condemnation of NT sinners. Salvation never was anything but salvation in Christ, even prior to his coming, and the jurisdiction of God’s law still condemns everyone who is not in Christ by faith. This is the most severe objection to seeing a temporal end to the law in v. 4.

Temporal “end” of the law:	Sinai	→	Law	→		Christ	→	Us	→	Rapture
Theological “end” or goal/purpose of the law	Us	→	Law	→	→	Christ				

Rom. 10:8 4. If we were to express the truth of Rom. 10:8 with mathematical symbols, we would need an equals sign (=). Paul is equating two “words” with the phrase “that is.” What exactly is Paul equating with the word of faith that he preaches?

Deut. 30:14

Answer: Paul equates the word referred to in Deut. 30:14 with the word of faith that he preaches. The word referred to in Deut. 30:14 is the law of God (vv. 11-13). Paul explains that his gospel is nothing new, because Christ has always been the purpose of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, as passages like Deut. 30:11-14 make clear. Here we see that God encourages His people with the promise that the law could be obeyed; His point is not that it cannot be obeyed. The key is that the act of faith regenerates the heart; it puts God’s law in the heart and in the mouth. This is Paul’s gospel of salvation by faith.

Application: It is important for the Bible student to endeavor to find Christ in the Old Testament, and the gospel of salvation by faith alone there as well. This is what Jesus and the apostles did, and we need to work at being able to do so as well. Though it can be difficult to reconcile Old Testament teaching with New Testament teaching, God’s Word forms a unified whole with no contradiction.

Notes:

Rom.
10:6-13

5. Paul continues to draw parallels between the gospel he preached and the doctrine of Deuteronomy 30. The Deuteronomy reference to the law *in the mouth* and *in the heart* parallels Paul's gospel that calls on men to confess *with the mouth* Jesus as Lord and to believe *in the heart* that God raised Him from the dead in order to be saved (Rom. 10:9-10). A new understanding called lordship salvation has given us much recent discussion about what it means to "confess Jesus as Lord". How can the parallelism of Deuteronomy 30 help us understand what Paul means by this important phrase?

Rom.
9:16

Answer: Just as we have in v. 8 a parallel with Deuteronomy 30 in terms of *law in mouth* = *confess Jesus as Lord* and in terms of *law in heart* = *believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead*, so also we have a similar parallel in vv. 6-7. Here we see that *ascend into heaven to bring Christ down* (v.6) = *as Lord* (v. 9) and that *descend into the abyss to raise Christ from the dead* (v. 7) = *that God has raised Him from the dead* (v. 9). This means that verse 6 helps us to understand what it means to have to confess Jesus as Lord in order to be saved. Paul is referring to the preexistence or deity of Christ's person and the miracle of the incarnation when he says that we need to confess Jesus as Lord. We must confess that Jesus is the God-man, or we have the wrong Jesus, one who does not exist and one that cannot save. Therefore, confessing Jesus as Lord is the same thing as calling on the name of the Lord (v. 13). Recognizing the name or nature of the Lord is paramount in to this condition for salvation.

Application: Confessing Jesus as Lord for salvation has little to do with the emphasis that advocates of Lordship salvation have perpetrated. This idea is best summarized as follows: "the view that for salvation a person must trust Jesus Christ as his Savior from sin and must also commit himself to Christ as Lord of his life, submitting to his sovereign authority" [John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The Gospel According to Jesus: What Does Jesus Mean When He Says "Follow Me"?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 34]. This is a misunderstanding of what it means to confess Jesus as Lord, because it misses the Romans 10 parallel with Deuteronomy 30. It is not that we must commit our lives to obey His sovereign will in order to be saved. True faith is not about our level of commitment or the strength of our willingness to obey God's sovereign will (Rom. 9:16).

Notes: For further discussion of the lordship salvation issue, see this author's review of John MacArthur's *The Gospel According to Jesus*.

Interesting Insight!

"The justifying instrument;--Faith. Not strong faith, or great faith, or perfect faith, but simply faith, or believing. 'We are justified by faith'" [Horatius Bonar, *The Everlasting Righteousness* (1874; reprint, Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1993), 79].

Address their plight by delivering the solution

Rom.
10:14-17

6. In this passage Paul describes the lifeline that can address the plight of the sinner. What are the five components of this life line?

Answer: The lifeline is senders → preachers → word of God → hearing → faith → calling on the name of the Lord. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God, and the word of God by sent preachers. Just as an optometrist's prescription for poor eyesight may be a set of reading glasses, God's prescription for the blindness of sinners is the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Paul describes the moment of sight for the Ephesian believers as coming after and being caused by their hearing and believing the message of truth, the gospel of their salvation (Eph. 1:13).

Application: Faithful gospel preachers need to be careful to maintain the integrity of the causal linkage that Paul establishes between the hearing of the word of God, normally through witnesses, and the coming of faith in a

sinner. Some neglect this Pauline emphasis in favor of concluding that faith comes through a prior work of regeneration. The basic assertion of this position is that nature determines decision, and therefore the nature of a sinner must be changed before he can decide to trust Christ for salvation. Those who hold to this view identify themselves as Calvinists, although they will admit that Calvin never actually interpreted “regeneration” specifically in this way. Calvin always saw regeneration as something subsequent to faith, similar to our concept of sanctification or Christian growth. Instead, these interpreters look to Martin Luther’s Bondage of the Will for historical precedent. This understanding, called the priority-of-regeneration-to-faith view of conversion, is also characterized by the definition of regeneration as the gift of a new nature, not merely the gift of new life, an emphasis on faith as a direct gift of God to the human heart, and a distinction between “common grace” and “special grace.” These emphases tend to lose sight of the importance of the word of God and preachers in the coming of faith to a sinner, because the New Testament is very clear that regeneration is a direct work of the Holy Spirit on the human heart. The view also has a very difficult time accounting for the many passages of Scripture that clearly describe the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the human heart as subsequent to faith (Eph. 1:13, John 3:1-18, 1 John 5:11-12). Whatever our theological persuasion in this regard, it is critical that we believe with Paul that faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of God, and typically the word of God by faithful preachers and witnesses.

Notes: Verse 16 tells us what it means for a sinner to obey the gospel. Simply, he obeys when he believes the gospel.

Address their plight by holding them responsible

Rom. 10:18-21 7. Billy Graham once told *McCall’s* magazine: “I used to play God, but I can’t do that any more. I used to believe that pagans in far-off countries were lost—were going to hell—if they did not have the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them. I no longer believe that”
Rom. 1:18-23 [James Michael Beam, “I Can’t Play God Any More,” *McCall’s* (Jan 1978), 156]. How is this view different from Paul’s treatment of the plight of the lost in vv. 18-21?

Answer: Billy Graham excuses sinners, claiming that they have never heard; the apostle Paul holds sinners responsible, claiming that they have all heard enough to be held accountable. The problem, according to Paul, is not that sinners have not heard (v. 18). The problem is that their response to what they have heard is disobedience and obstinacy (v. 21). Certainly Israel heard more than anyone, and they still disbelieved (vv. 19-20).

Application: We do the sinner a tragic disservice if we fail to hold him responsible for his rejection of God’s light, or if we fail to see his need for a gospel preacher. Graham’s position on the status of the unevangelized undermines evangelism. Paul is clear on the matter: sinners need to hear the word of God from a preacher in order to exercise saving faith; they need the gospel of Jesus Christ (10:14-17). He does not then immediately contradict himself in v. 18 by saying that nature makes preachers unnecessary. Rather, Paul uses Psalm 19 to describe what preachers of the church had done among the Gentiles. *Their* in Ps. 19 is the heavens, but in Rom. 10:18 *their* refers to the preachers of verse 15. Moule (p. 222): “The apostle hears more than nature in the Psalm; he hears grace and the gospel in the deep harmony which carries the immortal memory along.” Remember that Rom. 1:18-23 told us that the exceptions to this rule, the unevangelized of the world, have enough light to be held responsible for their response, which is to suppress it and profess their own wisdom rather than their need for salvation.

Note: The teacher should spend some time with the students explaining the Romans road and the necessary elements of a gospel presentation in the work of personal evangelism. Key elements from the Romans road approach include (1) Man’s sin (3:10, 3:23), (2) God’s love for the sinner (5:8), (3) God’s judgment of the sinner (Rom. 6:23a), (4) Christ’s work of atonement (Rom. 6:23b), (5) the free nature of the gift of eternal life (by grace through faith not of works; Rom. 6:23b), (6) the need to believe the gospel and call on the name of the Lord by faith for salvation (Rom. 10:9-10, 13). Other passages that could be used for this purpose are John 3 and 1 Cor. 15:1-3.

"God Has Not Cast Israel Away"

Romans 11:1-36

Lesson 11

Purpose:

The goal of Lesson 11 is to help your students appreciate and understand God's dealings with Israel. That understanding ought to give them a new appreciation for both the kindness and the severity of the Lord. This appreciation should thrill them with God's faithfulness, and humble them with His admonitions to be faithful themselves.

In A Nutshell

You may remember from Lesson 2 (Question 5) that Paul wrote Romans from Corinth on his third missionary journey, just prior to his departure to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25, Acts 20:2-3). With our hindsight today, we know that the trip to Jerusalem was a rough one for the apostle. He was not very popular in Jerusalem. As he writes this letter, Paul anticipates the possibility of trouble and asks the Roman believers to pray for his safety (15:30-31). These circumstances likely explain the emphasis Paul places on both the teachings of the Old Testament and the status of Israel throughout the book. This emphasis culminates here in Romans 11. In this chapter Paul brings his doctrinal dissertation to a close, and he does so by confronting head-on what the gospel he preached implies about God's dealings with Israel. Either God had cast them away, or he had not. If He had not, why then the church? Paul does not leave the issue in doubt for long: "God has not cast Israel away" (v. 1).

Outline for the passage:

Lesson 11: God has not cast Israel away 11:1-36

The remnant shows that God has not cast Israel away (vv. 1-6).

God's purpose for hardening shows that God has not cast Israel away (vv. 7-24).

God's guarantee for Israel's future shows that God has not cast Israel away (vv. 25-31).

The nature of God's work of salvation shows that God has not cast Israel away (vv. 32-36).

Answers and Applications:

The remnant shows that God has not cast Israel away

Rom.
11:1-10
9:27-33

1. Paul begins his assertion that God has not cast Israel away with an appeal to Scripture's remnant doctrine. The Greek nouns translated "remnant" in the NT are related to the Greek verb meaning "to leave behind." A remnant is some small portion left behind, like remnants of cloth after the curtains are finished. Examine Paul's treatment of the remnant doctrine here and in Rom. 9:27, list what God has done for the remnant of Israel, and state whether this work with the remnant of Israel is a NT only reality, an OT only reality, or both a NT and an OT reality. How does this last answer support Paul's assertion that God has not cast Israel away?

Answer: God saves the remnant (9:27), refuses to reject the remnant (11:1-2), foreknows the remnant (v. 2), and graciously chooses the remnant (11:5-6). Others are hardened (vv. 7-10). This work with the remnant of Israel is both an OT and a NT reality. The OT examples Paul lists are Elijah and the 7000 unbenders. The NT example Paul lists is himself. Paul's purpose is not to contrast God's work in the OT in this regard with his work in the NT; it is rather his purpose to show how they are the same (11:5, "In the same way then"). This supports Paul's assertion that God has not cast Israel away, because from the perspective of soteriology, nothing has changed in the way that God is dealing with Israel. In the NT era, only a remnant would be saved, and this is the same as the OT era. It is also true from the perspective of ecclesiology, that Israel has not been cast away; instead, they have been incorporated into the new ecclesia—the church is inclusive of Israelites.

Similarity	Soteriology	
	OT	NT
	Remnant of Israel saved	Remnant of Israel saved
Difference	Ecclesiology	
	OT	NT
	The nation of Israel	The local church (Jew + Gentile)

Application: To be a part of a remnant is to be a part of the minority, not the majority (Rom. 9:27). We often think that multiplying like the sand on the seashore is the best evidence of God's blessing, approval, and work, but the doctrine of the remnant teaches us the opposite: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved." Pastor John Ashbrook taught his congregation during the days of Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority movement the following important axiom of ministry philosophy: "God never accomplishes His will through the force of the majority, but through the faith of the minority." This timely and practical wisdom agrees well with the Bible's remnant doctrine.

Notes: Note that the reference to the stumbling block in verse 9 reminds us of Paul's reference to the stumbling block in 9:30-33. In that passage, Paul answers the nagging question "Why?". Why did Israel miss the blessing of God's salvation? The answer is that they failed to believe (9:32).

Interesting Insight!

"Where a race is not 'thrust away,' it is because 'God foreknew.' Where some thousands of members of that race, while others fall away, are found faithful to God, it is because He has 'left them for Himself, on the principle of choice of grace.' Where, in the midst of a widespread rejection of God's Son Incarnate, a Saul of Tarsus, an Aquila, a Barnabas, behold in Him their Redeemer, their King, their Life, their All, it is on that same principle. Let the man who sees and believes in this way give the whole thanks for his salvation in the quarter where it is all due. Let him not confuse one truth by another. Let not this truth disturb for a moment his certainty of personal moral freedom and of its responsibility. Let it not for a moment turn him into a fatalist. But let him abase himself and give thanks, and humbly trust the One who has laid hold of him for blessing in this way. As he does so in simplicity, not speculating but worshiping, he will need no subtle logic to assure him that he is to pray and to work, without reserve, for the salvation of all men. It will be more than enough for him that his Sovereign commands him to do it and tells him that it is according to His heart." [H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans* (1958; reprint, Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2001), 227-228].

Rom. 11:3, 5-6 **2. How did Elijah misapply the remnant doctrine? What does Paul say is the correct application of the remnant doctrine (vv. 5-6)?**

Answer: Elijah concluded that he was the only one who was being faithful—all alone in the fight against our spiritual enemy. The correct application of the remnant doctrine is that salvation is by God's gracious choice, not the force of our number or the force of our accomplishments. The remnant doctrine teaches us that salvation is by grace, not works.

Application: We need to be careful about developing the discouraging outlook that Elijah had developed as a part of the small remnant of his day. “I alone am left” is never a healthy approach to the calling of God. Better is the adage: “You and God make a majority.” God always has His witness, small in number though they may be, and we need to work at remembering that the phrase, “I alone am left,” is not true. We ought to do all we can to know and support faithful sister churches.

Notes:

God’s purpose for hardening shows that God has not cast Israel away

Rom. 11:7-10 9:30-33 Deut. 29:1-6 Isa. 29:9-14	3. Both Rom. 9:30-33 and Rom. 11:7-11 describe the condition of lost Israel. One of these passages also tells us what the cause of this condition is by answering the question “Why?” Which passage offers an answer to the “why?” of the condition of the loss, and what is its answer to this question?
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Answer: Rom. 9:30-33 contains Paul’s emphasis on the cause of the condition of the lost. The reason the lost are in the condition that they are in is their lack of faith in Jesus Christ. This condition may be described from Rom. 11:7-11 as a God-given hardening, but lack of faith has caused this condition. The passages Paul quotes in 11:8 give us an understanding of how this works.

Deut. 29:1-6 makes clear that the Lord had actually communicated to those who were told that they were blind and deaf an awful lot so that they might know the Him (v. 6). They were not given eyes to see or ears to hear because they were not given a heart to understand (v. 4). In Deuteronomy, this heart to understand, this regeneration, is the exclusive blessing of those who repent (Deut. 10:16).

The larger context of Isa. 29:9-14 indicates that the spirit of stupor or sleepiness is actually a part of the judgment of God on those who have failed to respond to God’s revelation as they should. People incur this judgment when they remove their hearts far from the Lord and pay only lip service to reverencing Him (v. 13).

To postulate a decree of reprobation from eternity past from Rom. 11:7-11 is to make the passage the cause for unbelief rather than the judgment incurred by unbelief. Certainly it is true that the hardening of judgment causes further unbelief, but it is also true that this judgment falls after the rejection of great light designed to lead Israel to the Lord.

Application: We need to understand that God not only responds in a positive way to faith, but He also responds in a negative way to unbelief. Rejection of revelation can lead to the withholding of further revelation under the judgment of God. Not coming to church when God wants you here can make it harder to come the next time. There is no neutral result when it comes to our response to the God’s Word. Either man believes and is blessed, or man disbelieves and is hardened. This hardening is accomplished through the withdrawal of exposure to God’s Word (Isa. 29:10-12). If we are blessed with exposure to God’s Word today, it is in part because God has not decided to harden us in judgment. Exposure to God’s Word is an act of divine mercy.

Notes:

Rom. 11:11-16	4. What is God’s purpose for hardening unbelieving Israel, and how does this purpose show that God has not cast Israel away?
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Answer: God’s purpose in hardening unbelieving Israel is to provoke them to jealousy so that they might ultimately be saved (11:11, 14, see also v. 24 and 31). God’s continuing desire for the salvation of Israel demonstrates the fact that He has not cast them away. He desires to still accept even those that He has rejected and hardened (v. 12, 15).

Application: It is God’s design for the church that we live in such a way as to provoke Israelites to desire what we have. Any approach to Christian living that abrogates God’s law would never have a chance to do this. The Israelite who in the plan of God has been taught to revere God’s law will not think very much of a religion that views anyone who desires to live according to God’s law as legalistic. To the contrary, without the law of God

written on the heart, the Church has no hope of living in such a way as to provoke law-respecting Israel to jealousy. This seems to be Paul's admonition in v. 16, where he demonstrates that if we are truly connected to a holy root, we are going to live holy lives.

Notes:

Rom. 11:17-24 5. What critical lesson ought members of the Christian Church glean from the way that God has dealt with Israel?

Answer: The lesson we need to glean from God's dealings with Israel is that God is both kind and severe (v. 22). Believers have a responsibility to be humble before those whom God is rejecting for their unbelief (v. 18), to remember that salvation is of Christ, the root, not of the believer, the branch (v. 18), and to fear a failure to continue (vv. 19-24).

Application: Believers today want to interpret the Old Testament, the time in which God dealt with Israel, as the time of God's severity; and they want to interpret the New Testament, the time in which God deals with the church, as the time of God's kindness. Paul sees no such dichotomy. Both the old era and the new era are governed by the immutable God who is always kind and always severe. We need to walk in fear before Him in the New Testament era, and the Israelite believer knew His blessed kindness in the Old Testament era.

Notes: Although many interpreters of Romans 11 identify the "root" of the passage as the patriarch, understanding this metaphor in terms of the blessing of union with Christ is more satisfactory. Paul uses the "root" concept in Col. 2:6-7 to describe our relationship with Jesus Christ. In addition, Romans 11 depicts connection to the root as the key to both holiness (v. 16) and the sustenance of life (vv. 17-18). The context of Paul's discussion regarding the root (vv. 11-15) indicates that connection to the root is the key to salvation (vv. 11-12), the reason for the gospel ministry (vv. 13-14), and the difference between rejection versus reconciliation, acceptance, and life from the dead (v. 15). No connection to a patriarch ever did this. Finally, Paul captures the teleology of the metaphorical root with a reference to Christ as the covenantal father of His people in Rom. 11:26-27 (cf. Romans 5). To be connected to the root is to be covenanted with Christ. It is to experience salvation by faith (vv. 15, 20, 23).

Against the Christological interpretation of the root stands the metaphor's apparent failure to support the doctrine of eternal security. Paul describes unbelieving Jews as originally connected to the root (v. 17), and he warns Gentile believers that continuance is necessary in order to remain connected (vv. 20-22). No metaphor corresponds in every detail with the truth the author desires to represent by it. Consequently, the interpreter must guard against pressing the metaphor to an extent that makes it teach things unintended by the author. We need not speculate, for instance, what the leaves on the branches might be or what the difference between green and black olives is in order to understand Paul's meaning in Romans 11. The point of correspondence that Paul uses between unbelieving Jews and broken branches is that unbelieving Jews are severed from the blessings of salvation in the same way broken branches are severed from a tree. The original connection aspect of the metaphor illustrates only that there is a historical connection between the unbelief of the Jews and the greater opportunity for the Gentiles to believe (v. 11, 15, 25). The metaphor says that Gentiles are grafted in where space has been opened up by the unbelief of the Jews; so one historical consequence of Jewish unbelief was that the gospel bore greater fruit among the Gentiles. Paul does not use the metaphor to indicate that the unbelieving Jews had at one time believed; nor does he use it to claim that no Gentile prior to the time of the fullness of the Gentiles was saved (Luke 11:31-32). In regard to the second issue raised by the warnings of verses 20-22, the Bible is clear that there are two kinds of faith, one that saves and one that does not (John 8:31-47; James 2:14-20). Paul's metaphor does not inhibit him from warning believing Gentiles of the importance of having the right kind of faith, the faith that continues, works, and saves.

God's guarantee for Israel's future shows that God has not cast Israel away

Rom. 11:25-31 6. With this passage we encounter a key question addressing one of the major issues separating premillennial dispensationalists from amillennial covenant theologians: the future of the nation of Israel. The covenant theologian claims that the church has superseded God's plan for national Israel, whereas dispensational systems conclude that it has not. When it comes to Rom. 11:25-31, the debate focuses on the phrase "and so all Israel shall be saved." Does the context indicate that this "all Israel" is a reference to God's new present work in the church, Jews and Gentiles, or a yet future work exclusive to national Israel? How so?

Answer: A normal reading of the passage indicates that by "all Israel" Paul refers to a yet future moment in time in which the nation of Israel will repent on the whole and be saved. Those who are saved in v. 26 are those that have been hardened in v. 25 and are the enemies of the gospel in v. 28. They will be saved because they are beloved for the sake of the fathers (v. 28). The dichotomy in this passage is Israel vs. Gentile, not Israel vs. church or national Israel vs. spiritual Israel (vv. 11, 12, 13, 15 (world), 25). In addition, *all* contrasts *remnant*, *partial*, and *some* (vv. 5-7, 17, 25).

Application: God keeps His promises (v. 29). When He says that He will remove ungodliness from Jacob, He means exactly that, not that he is going to start calling the Gentiles who get saved "Jacob." We need to be a people of our word, and we need to be a people who are always ready and willing to trust God's Word.

Notes:

The nature of God's work of salvation shows that God has not cast Israel away

Rom. 11:32-36 7. What are the motive (v. 32), character (vv. 33-35), and ultimate goal (v. 36) of God's work of salvation?

Answer: God's motive in His work of salvation is that He might have mercy upon all. God desires the salvation of everyone (v. 32). The character of God's work of salvation is inscrutable. Because it is a work of God, it cannot be fully fathomed (vv. 33-35). Finally, God's work of salvation is designed to bring Him glory. As the originator, sustainer, and destiny of all things, He deserves this glory.

Application: Salvation is the great work of our good God. Any interpretation of that work that makes us doubt His greatness or His goodness is a misinterpretation. His saving work in our lives will redound to His glory forever. This is why we exist.

Notes:

Interesting Insight!

"My favorite among these legendary figures and probably the greatest experimental scientist of all time is Michael Faraday (1791-1867). . . . If Michael Faraday had lived into the era of the Nobel prize, he would have been worthy of eight. Faraday discovered benzene and electromagnetic induction, invented the generator, and was the main architect of the classical field theory of electromagnetism.

" . . . As Faraday lay on his deathbed, a friend and well-wisher came by and asked, 'Sir Michael, what speculations have you now?' This friend was trying to introduce some cheer into the situation because the passion of Faraday's career had consisted of making speculations about science, then dashing into the laboratory to either prove or disprove them. It was a reasonable thing for a friend to say in a difficult situation and Faraday took the question seriously. He is said to have replied:

“Speculations, man, I have none! I have certainties. I thank God that I don’t rest my dying head upon speculations for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” [Henry F. Schaeffer III, “Science and Christianity: Conflict or Coherence?” in *Reading God’s World*, ed. Angus Menuge (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004), 135-136].

"The Walk of the Justified"

Romans 12:1-21

Lesson 12

Purpose:

The purpose of Lesson 12 is to teach our students the importance of matching doctrine with life, belief with walk, faith with practice. Christian love creates this match. We want our students to be characterized by Christian love in a greater way as a result of learning from this lesson.

In A Nutshell

The word *therefore* at the beginning of verse 1 of this chapter acts as a central pivot in the book of Romans. Around the axis of this word, Paul's argument swings from the doctrine of justification to the life of the justified, from what we must believe to how we must walk, from the faith of believers to their practice. It marks not only a shift in focus, but also a connection between what has come before and what follows. We know, therefore we do. This is the equation of the Christian life. We have reasons for the way we live, and they are captured in our body of doctrine. Charles Hodge explains: "The great principle, that truth is in order to holiness, which is so frequently taught in the Scriptures, is plainly implied in this passage. All the doctrines of justification, grace, election, and final salvation, taught in the preceding part of the epistle, are made the foundation for the practical duties enjoined in this, ver. 1" [*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (1864; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 393]. If we believe the content of Romans 1-11, we need to learn to live the walk of the justified found in chapter 12.

Outline for the passage:

Lesson 12: The walk of the justified 12:1-21

Preliminaries for the walk of the justified – be a sacrifice (12:1-2).

Connections for the walk of the justified – be a part of a local church (12:3-8).

Characteristics of the walk of the justified – love without hypocrisy (12:9-13:14).

Love good (12:9).

Love people (12:10-13).

Love enemies (12:14-21).

Answers and Applications:

Preliminaries for the walk of the justified – be a sacrifice (12:1-2)

Rom. 12:1 **1. Before Paul gets into the specifics of the walk of the justified, he mentions some preliminary basics of the Christian life that are foundational to living in this way. He does so with the use of a metaphor or word picture. First, what is the picture and what does the picture say about what is necessary at the inception of the justified walk? Second, what are the similarities and differences between the picture and what it symbolizes?**

Answer: Note that the word for *service* in the last phrase of the verse is a technical term for the temple service, the same word Paul uses in Rom. 9:4. In addition, when Paul speaks of our *reasonable* service, he means our temple service in a *mental, spiritual, or metaphorical* sense. One could translate the phrase, “your priestly service in a non-literal sense” (see BAGD on λογικός, and 1 Pet. 2:2). So we have a picture here, and the picture is that of an animal presented to the Lord for sacrifice on an altar.

The picture tells us that a presentation is necessary at the very inception of any effort to walk the justified life. We cannot walk the way saved people should walk unless we have first consecrated ourselves to please Him.

The picture is similar to what the life of a Christian ought to be like in that it involves a gift of the entire body for holy use. The picture is dissimilar to what the life of a Christian needs to be in three respects: (1) the sacrifice of Rom. 12:1 is a living sacrifice, (2) the Christian is both the priest presenting the sacrifice and the animal sacrificed, and (3) the sacrifice of an animal is a discrete act whereas the consecration of the believer is a growth process (see Rom. 12:2).

Application: We cannot live the way God wants us to unless we are willing to please Him entirely. We ought to present our lives to the Lord each day in this way. Our first thought upon waking should not be “What would please me next?” but rather “What do I need to do that pleases God today?” Elisha Hoffman’s hymn emphasizes the importance of this sense of surrender well in his hymn, “Is Your All on the Altar?”:

“You have longed for sweet peace, and for faith to increase, and have earnestly fervently prayed,
But you cannot have rest or be perfectly blest, until all on the altar is laid.

“Would you walk with the Lord in the light of His Word, and have peace and contentment alway?
You must do His sweet will to be free from all ill; on the altar your all you must lay.

“Oh, we never can know what the Lord will bestow of the blessings for which we have prayed,
Till our body and soul He doth fully control; and our all on the altar is laid.

“Who can tell all the love He will send from above! Oh, how happy our hearts will be made!
Oh, what fellowship sweet we shall share at His fee, when our all on the altar is laid!”

Notes: Some in the Wesleyan holiness tradition have interpreted Rom. 12:1 in support of the doctrine of Christian perfectionism, the idea that believers can be fully surrendered to Christ in this life and so obtain sinless perfection prior to death [see for instance Andrew Naselli’s discussion of Phoebe Palmer (1807-74) in “Keswick Theology” (Ph.D. diss., Bob Jones University, 2006), 49-54]. The word “present” is in the aorist tense, and some commentators have concluded from this that Paul calls for a discrete once-in-a-life-time experience that changes everything for the Christian. Verse two’s emphasis on a growth process, however, shows that such an interpretation of the command in verse 1 presses the metaphor too far. H. G. Moule explains: “It is a process, not a crisis: ‘grow transfigured.’ The origin of the process, the liberation of the movement, is, at least in idea, as definite as possible: “Give over your bodies.” The aorist tense of the Greek verb here suggests precisely the thought of a critical surrender. The Roman Christians, and ourselves, are called here, as above (6:13, 19), to a quite definite transaction with the Lord, whether or not something similar has taken place before or shall be done again. They are called, as if once for all, to look their Lord in the face and to clasp His gifts in their hands, and then to put themselves and His gifts altogether into *His* hands for perpetual use and service. So, from the side of his conscious experience, the Christian is called to a decisive, crucial, instantaneous ‘hallowing of himself.’ But its outcome is to be a perpetual progression, a growth, not so much ‘into’ grace as ‘in’ it (2 Pet. 3:18), in which the surrender in purpose becomes a long series of deepening surrenders in habit and action; and a larger discover of self, and of the Lord, and of His will, takes effect in the ‘shining’ of the transfigured life ‘more and more, unto the perfect day’ (Prov. 4:18)” [H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans* (n.p.: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 1958; reprint, Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications), 262].

Rom. 12:2 2. Verse 2 outlines in concrete terms what it takes to “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” The believer must care for two responsibilities in this regard, one negative and one positive. On the negative side, he must not be *conformed* to this world or age, and on the positive side he must be *transformed* by the renewing of his mind. Take a look at the “From the Honeycomb” section below, and then describe how avoiding conformity and pursuing transformation differ. What is the key difference between these two spiritual duties?

2 Cor. 11:14

Answer: When Paul tells believers that they must not be conformed to this world, he is referring to what must be true about them on the outside. When he says that believers are to be transformed he speaks of a change that goes deep into the inside of a person. 2 Cor. 11:14 helps illustrate this difference, because Satan can change his outside or appearance into an angel of light, but not his inside or essence. Using our English terms, he can conform to light but he cannot transform to light. The believer can both conform and transform to both the world and the image of Christ.

Application: The Bible teaches us that both our outside and our inside must undergo a change if we are to please the Lord and do His will.

In regard to the outside, we have to make sure that we do not appear to be a part of a world that is lost and separated from God in terms of what man can observe. We should not look, sound, or act in such a way that our looks, sounds, or actions would be identifiable as those that have been used in a distinct way by the world apart from God. Remember the Sesame Street game, “Which one of these things is not like the other?” If we are not conformed to this age in the sense meant by Paul, our kids ought to be able to play that game given the difference between ourselves and anything that is used distinctively by the world apart from God. So the discernment needed here is an understanding of what looks, sounds, and actions are distinctively characteristic of a world culture in rebellion against God.

Take language for instance. There are some four-letter words in our language that may not be especially sinful in terms of their definition, yet we still see the need to avoid them in our culture. I saw a bumper sticker last week that said, “Compost Happens.” It may be that this bumper sticker exhibits a desire to avoid one of these four-letter words. Believers avoid these words because they are utilized in a unique way by a world that is apart from God. We never are tempted to use Christian swearing during testimony time at church.

In a similar sense, conformity to the world is one of the significant problems with the idea of Christian Rock-n-Roll. The sounds of Rock-n-Roll are sounds uniquely employed by the world apart from God, musical swearing in a certain sense. Inserting Christian lyrics into a Rock format is configuring those lyrics to a sound that is distinctive of the world in rebellion to God. That is the world that invented and still celebrates the genre today. Christian Rock is analogous to preaching the word with four-letter words. Both configure the believer’s worship to a convention of communication that is distinctive of the world apart from God. Many believers today do all they can to look, sound, and act as much as possible like the world apart from God. This is a failure to make a holy sacrifice of yourself, because it involves a failure to put an observable difference between the clean and the unclean—the essence of true holiness (Ezek. 22:26, 44:23).

In regard to the inside, the transformation that must occur relies heavily on the renewal of the mind. Controlling what we allow to affect our thinking has everything to do with how we grow in grace. The change that occurs is a change in our nature. Like the development of a caterpillar into a butterfly, the believer takes on the image of Christ as he renews his thinking with the word of God.

Notes:

From The Honeycomb

Note a difference between English and Greek in regard to the phrase:
“Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed” (Rom. 12:2).

English communicates a similarity between the processes with the use of a single root *formed*:

“Be not con-*formed*”

“But be trans-*formed*”

Greek communicates the dissimilarity between the processes with the use of two roots (*schematizō* and *morphoō*):

“Be not con-*figured* (su-*schematizō*)”

“But be trans-*formed* (meta-*morphoō*)”

Richard Trench describes well the difference between *to figure* (*schematizō*) and *to form* (*morphoō*) for the Greeks in a discussion of 2 Cor. 11:14, where Paul tells us that Satan is able to change himself or trans-*figure* (meta-*schematizō*) into an angel of light: “It is possible for Satan μετασχηματίζειν [to meta-*schematizō*] himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. xi. 14); he can take the whole outward semblance of such. But to any such change of his it would be impossible to apply the μεταμορφοῦσθαι [meta-*morphoō*]: for this would imply a change not external but internal, not of accidents but of essence, which lies quite beyond his power”

[Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (1880; reprint, Eerdmans, 1983), 263-264.]

Interestingly, the New American Standard Bible translates 2 Cor. 11:14 using the word *disguise*: “No wonder, for even Satan disguises (meta-*schematizō*) himself as an angel of light.”

Notes: A. M. Ramsey in *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1949), p. 54: “When St. Paul says, ‘be not outwardly fashioned (συνσχηματίζεσθε) according to this world; but be ye changed in real being (μεταμορφοῦσθε) by the renewing of your mind.’”

Connections for the walk of the justified – be part of a local church (12:3-8)

Rom. 12:3-8 **3. Although each individual believer must become a living sacrifice consecrated to please the Lord, no believer is called to do this alone. The walk of the justified has some important connections, and those connections are illustrated with another Pauline analogy, the body. In a practical sense, a body must have both unity and diversity to function in a healthy way. What is the key to the unity of the body (vv. 3-5), and what is the key to the diversity of the body (vv. 6-8). What truths can help us not misplace these keys?**

Answer: The key to the unity of the body is humility. Without unity, the body suffers from seizures. A healthy body works together. We will remember humility when we remember (1) that God is the gift-giver (v. 1, “through the mercies of God”; v. 3, “through the grace give to me”; v. 3, “as God has allotted to each a measure of faith”), (2) that our connection to Him is also a connection to one another (v. 5), and (3) that our gifts are to be applied in specific ministries of the church such as “serving” (v. 7), “teaching” (v. 8), “exhortation” (v. 9).

The key to diversity is to exercise your gift in the cause of Christ. Without the diversity of its gifts, the body suffers from paralysis. A healthy body can see, hear, and walk, because all the body parts are in working order.

Application: Some of the gifts Paul mentions have specific regulators associated with them. In verse 6 the phrase, “according to the proportion of faith” could be translated, “according to agreement with the faith.” Charles Hodge interprets the phrase this way (p. 390). Exercising of the gift of prophecy was to be done within the limits of the faith, the body of truth already revealed to God’s people. Giving is to be done with generosity or liberality (so NASB, v. 8). Leaders are supposed to show diligence (v. 8), the same word employed in verse 11 (literally, “with diligence rather than laziness”).

Notes:

Interesting Insight!

Regarding “as God has allotted to each a measure of faith” (v. 3): “The one Lord distributes the one faith-power into many hearts, ‘measuring’ it out to each, so that the many, individually believing in the One, may not collide and fight but lovingly cooperate in many kinds of service, the result of their “like precious faith” (2 Pet. 1:2) conditioned by the variety of their lives” [Moule, 263].

Characteristics of the walk of the justified – love without hypocrisy (12:9-21)

Rom. 12:9 4. According to Paul, can love and hate coexist? Why or why not?

Matt. 24:12

Answer: Paul clearly indicates that the person who loves without hypocrisy is also a person who abhors what is evil and clings to what is good. In this sense, love and hate can, and even must, coexist. One does not truly love someone until he hates what can harm that person.

Application: Believers who desire to love without hypocrisy need to learn to see issues in stark terms of black and white. This true Bible antithesis between good and evil is often denied in our relativistic world of gray. Christians introduce the fuzzy gray and lose sincere love when we tolerate and enjoy some of the evil and when we lack an appetite for some of the good. Often this kind of compromise is excused in the name of love, as though Christian love and abhorrence of evil could not coexist. This is a false dichotomy, however, and the compromise it creates fosters a cold, stale, political, and ultimately hypocritical love. True Christian love is without hypocrisy. It stays that way by abhorring the evil and clinging to the good. It is where iniquity abounds that the love of many grows cold (Matt. 24:12).

Notes:

Rom. 12:10-21 5. Love for people, even enemies, is a key characteristic of the justified walk. Specific virtues exhibit this love. Fill out the chart below by identifying a Bible character that was a positive (+) example and one that was a negative (-) example in regard to each virtue Paul lists in this section.

Answer:

Verse:	Virtue:	+ Example:	- Example
v. 10	Brotherly love	Jonathan, 1 Sam. 18:1	Joseph’s brothers, Gen. 37:20
v. 11	Diligence and fervency	Apollos, Acts 18:25	John Mark, Acts 13:13
v. 12	Patience and prayer	Early disciples, Acts 1:14	Saul, 1 Sam. 13:8-14
v. 13	Generosity and hospitality	Abraham, Gen. 18:1-15	Simon the Pharisee, Luke 7:44-45
vv. 14-21	Bless Enemies	Christ, Luke 23:34	Lamech, Gen. 4:23-24

Application: Handley Moule correctly concludes in regard to the duty of the Christian: “Again, his life is to be essentially social. He is thought of as one who meets other lives at every turn, and he is never to forget or neglect his relation to them” [p. 274]. Note that verse 15 forbids shadenfreude in relation to our enemies.

Notes:

Interesting Insight!

Peter Steveson has a good explanation of the sense in which Paul instructs believers to heap coals of fire on the heads of their enemies with his quotation of Prov. 25:21 (v. 20): “The phrase ‘heap coals of fire on his head’ most naturally refers to the judgment that takes place upon those who reject our offer of love. When we act in a loving way to our enemy, he has only two responses. If he is brought to remorse over his actions, he can respond in a kindly manner and the breach will be healed. If, however, he rejects our kindly actions, he puts himself in a position in which the wrath of God will overtake him. God’s judgment, the ‘coals of fire,’ will rain down upon his life by way of punishment for his evil actions and attitudes” [*A Commentary on Proverbs* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2001), 355].

"The Justified and the State"

Romans 13

Lesson 13

Purpose:

The purpose of lesson 13 is to develop a godly commitment to responsible citizenship on the part of our students.

We live in a culture that values distrust and disrespect of all forms of authority, especially governmental authority.

This is not a Christian value, however. God's people need a submissive and cooperative commitment to governmental authority.

In A Nutshell

Authority is not a popular word today, but it is a word that appears five times in the first three verses of Romans 13.

Written authority is *law*, and that word occurs twice in the chapter (vv. 8, 10). Clearly, Paul focuses here on the Christian's responsibility before civil government. An appreciation for authority and law characterizes the justified life in Christ. The justified do not see authority and law as inhibitions to true happiness. Paul begins his instruction in this regard by discussing the nature of civil government (vv. 1-4), and he ends by exhorting justified citizens to responsible citizenship (vv. 5-14).

Outline for the passage:

Lesson 13: The justified and the state 13:1-14

The nature of civil government (13:1-4).

The authorization for civil government (13:1-2).

The responsibility of civil government (13:3-4).

The life of justified citizens (13:5-14).

Their responsibility (13:5-8).

Their motivation (13:9-10).

Their witness (13:11-14).

Answers and Applications:

The nature of civil government (13:1-4)

Romans
13:1-2

1. Paul begins with a statement containing the starting point of a Biblical view of political theory. Here he describes where civil government obtains its right or authorization to govern. As Americans we treasure our Declaration of Independence, a document also full of political theory about the authorization of governments (see "Interesting Insight!" below). What gives governments the right to govern according to Paul? What authorizes governments according to the Declaration? How are these doctrines similar and how are they different?

Answer: Paul tells us that civil governments obtain authorization from the establishment and appointment of the God of the Bible. The *Declaration* tells us that civil governments obtain authorization from the consent of the governed in view of their God-of-the-Bible-given rights. These doctrines are similar because they both recognize a higher civil authority than civil government, the Creator God of the Bible. Without Him, these doctrines fail because their arguments depend on His existence. Paul's statement in this regard is explicit: "The powers that be are ordained of God." The *Declaration* makes essentially the same point when it says that men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable (nontransferable) rights (1 Pet. 2:16). It is these rights that qualify them to give their consent to be governed.

The doctrines of Paul and the *Declaration* are different in at least two respects. First, Paul emphasizes the responsibility of the citizen (submit), whereas the *Declaration* emphasizes the responsibility of the government (secure/protect unalienable rights). Second, the *Declaration* argues that a government loses its authorization when the governed no longer consent because their rights are being violated. Paul leaves the question of lost authorization untouched (but see 1 Kings 12:1-24).

Application: There exists a higher civil authority than human civil government. This authority is the God of the Bible. Two applications are important for us as Christians. (1) We ought to recognize that civil government is a blessing from God, not a curse. Even the despotism of Saddam Hussein was preferable to the anarchy that tore apart Iraq immediately after his fall. Handley Moule said it correctly: "The worst settled authority is infinitely better than real anarchy" (*Romans*, 283). Paul wrote to Roman Christians in the days of Nero, and yet his message is a call to submission rather than revolution. We need to have an appreciation for civil authorities, recognizing them as the appointment of God.

(2) We also need to understand the importance of the God of the Bible to the well-being of civil government and the protection of nontransferable rights. Every form of civil government must answer to God and to His Messiah Jesus Christ (*servant of God* Rom. 13:4(2), 6; Psalm 2; Ps. 33:8-12; Ps. 72:8-11; Rev. 19:16). Replacing the God of the Bible's ultimate civil authority with the authority of man makes rights transferable, a function of political victories rather than a created order. Making the right to life transferable makes it a political debate about abortion and euthanasia; making the right to liberty something other than God-given makes it a debate about licentious lifestyles; when the right to the pursuit of happiness becomes something other than a blessing created by God, it becomes a battle for political positioning in a welfare state. Recognizing the God of the Bible as the highest civil authority in the land is crucial to the ultimate survival of any institutions of human civil government that recognize and care for human rights.

Notes:

Interesting Insight!

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security" [*The Declaration of Independence*].

Rom. 13:3-4 **2. The Declaration of Independence emphasizes more the responsibility of government than it does the authorizing of government. Paul describes the responsibility of government in verses 3-4. From these verses, what is the responsibility of government and what tool has God given government to execute this responsibility? Then, with the help of the other verses listed, how should believers respond to governments that are irresponsible?**

Acts 4:19

1 Tim. 2:1-2

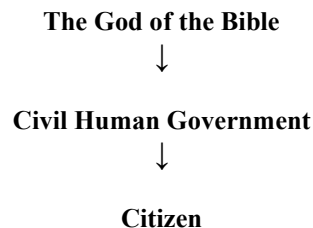
Answer: Governments are responsible to praise those who do what is good in the eyes of the God of the Bible and to make fearful and bring wrath upon those who do what is evil in the eyes of the God of the Bible. Note, therefore, that the wrath they bring upon evil is ultimately the wrath of the God of the Bible. God has given them the sword as a tool to accomplish this task, the right to administer civil penalties up to and including capital punishment. Irresponsible governments should be disobeyed when they require us to disobey God (Acts 4:19), and they should be changed when they fail to provide believers with the opportunity to live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Application: Romans 13 does not teach that civil governments are always to be obeyed and never questioned. The Bible describes contexts in which both civil disobedience (Exod. 1:22-2:4) and revolution (Exod. 3:7-10; 1 Kings 11:11, 31, 12:15-19) were the will of God. Civil disobedience becomes necessary when the civil government commands us to disobey God. Revolution has been God's will in contexts in which God has desired to deliver an oppressed people (the Exodus) or punish a nation for its wickedness (the rebellion of the 10 tribes).

Notes:

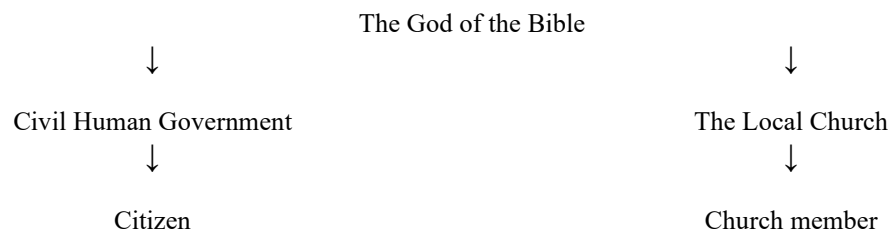
Matt. 28:16-20 **3. We might diagram what we have learned thus far from Romans 13 regarding the authorization and responsibilities of civil government as follows:**

Acts 1:6-8



Notice that our passage does not say anything specifically about the “church” or “church member” in these verses. How would you add the concepts “church” and “church member” to the diagram above?

Answer: Paul does not need to refer to the role of the “church” or the “church member” when he talks about how the justified should live in relationship to the state. Note that what he says in Rom. 13:1 applies to “every soul.” This is an indication of the fact that Paul here deals with a jurisdiction that does not involve the church or people who are specifically identified as church members. Instead, a basic assumption of Paul’s instruction is that state authority and membership is a separate jurisdiction from church authority and membership. This doctrine of the separation of church and state might be diagrammed as follows:



Application: Note that the state and the church possess not only two limited jurisdictions, but also two limited missions. The church should not seek earthly kingdom power; rather, it should make disciples (Matt. 28:16-20, [note the worship of Christ in v. 17]). The church operates with power (*dunamis*) in this world, not authority (*exousia*) (Acts 1:6-8, 3:21).

The state should not seek spiritual kingdom power, which means that it should not make disciples. Note, however, that making disciples is at the center of education. This is why the applicability of the First Amendment to the realm of state-sponsored education has been so difficult to consistently apply (Prov. 1:7). Public schools succeed to the degree they see themselves as the surrogate of the family rather than the state.

Notes:

A related principle of premillennial Dispensationalism teaches that the church is a kingdom that is not of this world (John 18:36) and that our commonwealth is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). This contrasts God's expectation for Israel, both past (Deut. 16:18, Exod. 18:21-23) and future (Rev. 20:4, 6). OT laws designed to regulate Israel as a national state no longer hold ecclesiological applicability to God's people in the church age (Ex. Lev. 19:9), although the soteriological and ethical applicability of laws like Lev. 19:9 remains authoritative today. Note that there are three spheres of application for a precept like Lev. 19:9: (1) the need for salvation (soteriology), (2) the need for community (ecclesiology), and (3) the need for morality (ethics). The introduction of a new ecclesiology with the founding of the church makes the ecclesiology of the law obsolete. Yet because the ecclesiology of the law both typifies soteriology and administers ethical principles, the obsolescence of the ecclesiology of the law happens in a qualified sense. It is not that ecclesiological sections of the law are no longer useful; it is rather that no section of the law is applicable to the church in an ecclesiological sense. No part of the law defines our community. The New Testament church does not discipline a farmer who harvests his entire field because that would be an ecclesiastical application of the law to the church—an ecclesia entirely distinct from the Israel whose ecclesia this instruction regulates. Nevertheless, the New Testament church may discipline a member who refuses to show the generosity exemplified by this regulation, for the ethical application of the law has not been abrogated by the New Testament revelation. In addition, a New Testament evangelist might use this regulation to expose the sin of greed and the need for unbelievers to repent and trust the work of Christ. In an ecclesiastical sense, the regulation of Lev. 19:9 used to apply to farmers, and now it no longer does. In an ethical sense, the regulation of Lev. 19:9 always taught merchants as well as farmers to be generous, and it still accomplishes this task today. In a soteriological sense, the regulation of Lev. 19:9 highlights the natural selfishness of human hearts in both the old and new eras. This law exposed the sinner's need for salvation by grace in Moses' day, and it does the same in ours.

The life of justified citizens (13:5-14)

Rom. 13:5-7 **4. What are the responsibilities that a Christian has under the authority of civil governments? What is the highest human civil authority in the United States, and how does this affect our specific sense of responsibility as Americans.**

1 Tim. 2:1-2

Answer: Believers are responsible to pray for their civil authority (1 Tim. 2:1-2), willingly obey civil authorities (Rom. 13:5), pay taxes to support them (Rom. 13:6-7), and honor them (Rom. 13:7). The highest human civil authority in the United States is "We the people." We have a government that is "of the people, by the people, and for the people." For this reason, we are responsible not only for faithfulness as the governed, but also for faithfulness as governors. We need to stay engaged in the political well-being of our country with the guiding principle that the nation is blessed whose God is the Lord.

Application: Note the importance of giving honor to civil authorities. Political satire is not the preferred mode of communication for Christians in the public square, although we are willing to make a pointed remark when necessary (Luke 13:31-32).

Notes:

Interesting Insight!

“The United States a Christian Nation”

Author: David J. Brewer (1837-1910)

Publisher: The John C. Winston Company, 1905.

Associate Justice, Supreme Court of the United States, 1890-1910

“This Republic is classified among the Christian nations of the world. It was so formally declared by the Supreme Court of the United States. In the case of Holy Trinity Church vs. United States, 143 U. S. 471, that Court, after mentioning various, circumstances, added, "these and many other matters which might be noticed, add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation." (Unanimous opinion, Feb. 29, 1892)

“It is not exaggeration to say that Christianity in some of its creeds was the principal cause of the settlement of many of the colonies, and co-operated with business hopes and purposes in the settlement of the others. Beginning in this way and under these influences it is not strange that the colonial life had an emphatic Christian tone....

“In Delaware, by the Constitution of 1776, every officeholder was required to make and subscribe the following declaration: "I, A.B., do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His Only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed forevermore; and I do acknowledge the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration."

“Mississippi, by the Constitution of 1817, provided that 'no person who denies the being of God or a future state of rewards and punishments shall hold any office in the civil department of the State.

“While the word "God" is not infrequently used both in the singular and plural to denote any supreme being or beings, yet when used alone and in the singular number it generally refers to that Supreme Being spoken of in the Old and New Testaments and worshipped by Jew and Christian. In that sense the word is used in constitution, statute and instrument. In many State Constitutions we find in the preamble a declaration like this: "Grateful to Almighty God." In some he who denied the being of God was disqualified from holding office. It is again and again declared in constitution and statute that official oaths shall close with an appeal, "So help me, God." When, upon inauguration, the President-elect each four years consecrates himself to the great responsibilities of Chief Executive of the Republic, his vow of consecration in the presence of the vast throng filling the Capitol grounds will end with the solemn words, "So help me God, Amen." Every foreigner attests his renunciation of allegiance to his former sovereign and his acceptance of citizenship in this Republic by an appeal to God.

“In short, there is no charter or constitution that is either infidel, agnostic or anti-Christian. Wherever there is a declaration in favor of any religion it is of the Christian. In view of the multitude of expressions in its favor, the avowed separation between church and state is a most satisfactory testimonial that it is the religion of this country, for a peculiar thought of Christianity is of a personal relation between man and his Maker, uncontrolled by and independent of human government.

“The New York Supreme Court, in *Lindenmuller vs. The People*, 33 Barbour, 561, held that: "Christianity is not the legal religion of the State, as established by law. If it were, it would be a civil or political institution, which it is not; but this is not inconsistent with the ideal that it is in fact, and ever has been, the religion of the people. This fact is everywhere prominent in all our civil and political history, and has been, from the first, recognized and acted upon by the people, as well as by constitutional conventions, by legislatures and by courts of justice..."”

Quoted in Catherine Millard, *The Rewriting of America's History* (Camp Hill, PA: Horizon House Publishers, 1991), pp. 387-93. Edited by Rev. P. W. Gustine.

**Rom.
13:8-14**

5. What are two causes that ought to motivate Christians to be responsible citizens?

Answer: Christians ought to be motivated to be responsible citizens with a desire to (1) love their neighbors and thereby fulfill God's law (vv. 8-10) and with a desire to (2) maintain a testimony of Christ-likeness before the world (vv. 11-14).

Application: To put on the armor of light is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, to develop Christ-likeness through a personal walk with Him. Handley Moule describes how Augustine's life was changed by the truths of vv. 13-14: "In his Confessions he records how, in the garden at Milan, at a time of great moral conflict, he was strangely attracted by a voice, perhaps the cry of children playing: 'Take and read, take and read.' He fetched and opened again a copy of the Epistles which he had lately laid down. 'I read in silence the first place on which my eyes fell: 'Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh and its lusts.'" I neither cared, nor needed, to read further. At the close of the sentence, as if a ray of certainty were poured into my heart, the clouds of hesitation fled at once.' His will was in the will of God.

To us the Spirit's voice will say of this same text, 'Take and read, take and read.' We will 'put on,' never to take off. Then we shall step out of the old path in a strength that is new and to be renewed forever, armed against evil, armed for the will of God, with Jesus Christ our Lord" [*Romans*, 295-296].

Notes:

"The Unity of the Justified"

Romans 14:1-15:13

Lesson 14

Purpose:

The purpose of lesson 14 replicates one of Paul's practical purposes for the book of Romans: to encourage a unified church. Your students should achieve a greater measure of spiritual maturity that enables them to nurture a spirit of unity among believers as they study this lesson.

In A Nutshell

When we remember that Paul wrote the book of Romans on the eve of his fateful journey to Jerusalem, it is easy to account for his concern for the unity of the justified people of God as he comes to the letter's close (Rom. 15:26-29). The division between Jew and Greek had hampered the church from its inception, even during those early days when both the Hellenist and the Hebrew were Jewish (Acts 6:1). The introduction of Gentiles and the unique ministry of their apostle eventually led to the need for a church council (Acts 15), and in spite of the progress achieved there, Paul still feared not only the hostility of those in Jerusalem who were disobedient, but also the attitude of those there whom he knew to be saints (Rom. 15:30-31). Paul wants believers to unite, and he finishes the book of Romans challenging them to unity. To this end he counsels believers to welcome one another (14:1-12), to keep one another from stumbling (14:13-15:4), and to serve for God's glory (15:5-13).

Outline for the passage:

Lesson 14: The unity of the justified 14:1-15:13

Welcome one another (14:1-12).

How to welcome one another (14:1-6).

Why welcome one another (14:7-12).

Keep one another from stumbling (14:13-15:4).

Love must be added to knowledge (14:13-15).

Testimony must be added to goodness (14:16-18).

Edification of others must be added to personal well-being (14:19-15:4).

Serve together for God's glory (15:5-13).

God-glorifying service has a pattern (15:5-7).

God-glorifying service is indiscriminate (15:8-9)

God-glorifying service is motivated (15:8-9)

God-glorifying service is purposeful (15:8-12)

God-glorifying service is not in vain (15:13)

Answers and Applications:

Welcome one another (14:1-12)

Rom. 14:1; 15:1 4:20 Eph. 6:10 2 Tim. 2:1

1. Division always involves at least two parties that are having trouble getting along. What names does Paul give the two sides of this argument, and what do the names of each indicate about who was right and who was wrong? Armed with this understanding of the situation, what would have been the quickest way for these believers to unite?

Answer: The two sides are the “strong in faith” and the “weak in faith.” A person who is strong in faith is someone who has learned to trust the Word of God as Abraham did (Rom. 4:20). Someone who is weak in faith has not been able to completely trust God’s Word. The names indicate that those who were willing to eat all things were correct, and those who were willing to eat only vegetables were incorrect. Note that in addition to dietary issues, observance of religiously sacred days was also a source of confusion (v. 5a).

Application: Imagine hearing for the first time Paul’s instruction in Rom. 14:1-3 as a member of the congregation who believed that Christians should eat only vegetables. How would this instruction affect you? It would encourage you to have fewer scruples about eating meat. Paul could have remained more neutral than he did in this argument. He might have named the divided parties something like “progressive in faith” and “conservative in faith” or “adventurous in faith” and “careful in faith,” but he did not. One side was clearly right and so “strong in faith,” and one side was clearly wrong and so “weak in faith.” This difference mattered enough to the apostle to call it what it was. Clearly, the quickest way to unity would have been for weak believers to see the importance of being strong (Eph. 6:10; 2 Tim. 2:1).

Strength in faith is a growth process and so at different stages from believer to believer. The truth against which we measure the strength of our faith, however, is never something different or relative to a believer. Strong is always right and weak is always wrong. Today, the issue of Bible translations has many parallels to the dietary and sacred-days issues facing Christendom in Paul’s day. It divides good churches with a pervasiveness that parallels what Paul was trying to correct in Rome. Imagine the affect of receiving a letter from Paul today that said, “Those who are weak in faith believe that you can only use the KJV, whereas those who are strong in faith believe that you can use newer translations that have improved upon the KJV.” That would settle things a bit quicker for us, and Paul no doubt desired this effect as part of what he hoped to accomplish in this chapter.

Notes: Care should be taken to note that strong faith does not always advocate liberty on every matter. Strong faith advocates liberty when the scripture does, and it advocates avoidance when the scripture does. Weak faith advocates liberty when the scripture does not, and it advocates avoidance when the scripture does not. So often the conclusion is reached from passages like this one that strong faith always is on the side of liberty. That is clearly not the case. A more accurate description of the truth here may be diagramed as follows:

	Standards Allow	Standards Disallow
Rom. 14-15: Liberty is Scriptural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eat “unclean” foods Celebrate/miss holidays 	Strong in faith	Weak in faith
1 Cor. 8-10: Abstinence is Scriptural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flee idolatry Do not eat meat known to be sacrificed to idols (associational problems) 	Weak in faith	Strong in faith

Although Paul deals with the shaded areas in Romans 14-15, it is not true that the other areas do not exist. The Bible clearly advocates abstinence from practices that the scripture indicates are evil (1 Thess. 5:22). Those who are strong in the faith practice this kind of abstinence. The Bible also clearly condemns liberty in certain matters such as female pastor-teachers (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12). The question is never “what is the freest thing to do?” (the vertical bold line above) but always “what is the scriptural thing to do?” (the horizontal bold line above). It is the horizontal bold line, not the vertical one that is the key to strong faith.

Rom.
14:2
14:14a
Acts
10:9-16
Daniel
1:8-13

2. Consider the example of Daniel. Clearly, Scripture portrays Daniel as a hero of the faith, a believer who was strong not weak, yet he too was a vegetarian for the same reasons the weak believers of Romans 14 were. What had changed? How do we account for the fact that the vegetarian Daniel was strong while the vegetarians of Romans 14 were weak?

Answer: In Daniel's day it was unscriptural for Jews to indiscriminately eat with Gentiles. God had ordained dietary laws that required abstinence from not only eating, but also touching certain kinds of meat (Lev. 11:8). Cross-contamination from unclean to clean was a real problem (Hag. 2:12-13). Some believers in Rome evidently sought to follow in Daniel's footsteps. What had changed, however, is that God had declared things previously unclean to be now clean. He did this in Acts 10:9-16.

Application: Whereas the convictions of Daniel were noble in his day, they were ignoble in Paul's day. To follow scripture is noble; to follow something other than scripture is not. God's plan had changed from nation to church, and the failure to live by the dictates of this new revelation was costly, not admirable, in a New Testament context (Gal. 2:11-14). In like manner we ought to weigh the worthiness of a conviction not on the scale of tradition, but rather on the scale of scripture. For instance, where does the Bible teach that an English-speaking Christian should use exclusively the KJV? The Bible nowhere says such a thing, and using such a view to define the community in our day commits the error of Gal. 2:11-14.

Notes: God had three reasons for giving his people dietary applications: (1) to teach them that He is holy and that He desires them to be holy (Lev. 11:44-45); (2) to teach them that their lives ought to be regulated by a clear difference between right and wrong (Lev. 11:47); and (3) to create a dietary barrier between them and Gentile nations so as to sustain their status as a unique nation. The first of these relates to man's need for salvation, the second to man's need for a sense of right and wrong or ethics, and the third to man's need for the community of God's people. OT and NT application of these laws are the same in terms of the first two applications, but different in the third. A table will help to illustrate again.

How to apply the dietary laws of Leviticus 11

	In terms of salvation	In terms of ethics	In terms of community
OT Era	Same in both the Old and New Testaments: God is holy and His people must be too.	Same in both the Old and New Testaments: Practical holiness involves putting a difference between right and wrong	OT only: regulates the diet of a nation that is God's people
NT Era			NT only: the diets of God's people are regulated by their own civil governments

Rom. 14:3-12 **3. Although Paul does not ignore the issue of who is right and who is wrong, he does suggest that this issue has little to do with our ability to experience unity. In any good church, someone always is going to be wrong about something, but we still need to welcome one another in spite of these growing pangs. From verses 3-12, list the specific instructions Paul gives about how (or how not) to welcome one another and about why (or why not) to welcome one another.**

Answer: Specific instructions regarding how to welcome one another include (1) do not regard with contempt or judge (v. 3, 10), (2) let each be fully convinced in his own mind (v. 5; see Rom. 4:21), and (3) learn to appreciate the motives of others (v. 6). Specific instructions about why to welcome one another include (1) because God is the judge and He has accepted both groups (vv. 3-4; 10-12) and (2) because Christ died for both groups (vv. 7-9).

Application: The passage teaches us two important principles about doctrinal truth. First, some truth is more important than other truth. Not all kinds of error should necessitate separation. The truth that God will judge sin is more important than the truth that all Christians can eat pork. Deny the first truth and you forfeit fellowship; deny the second one and believers are still called to unite with you. We need to recognize what truths ought to serve as a test for fellowship and what truths should not, and we need to understand the difference. Second, all truth is important enough to become fully convinced about right and wrong even in the details of life. Paul does not say ignore divisive issues, nor does he say it is ok for believers to always disagree on these things because there is no right answer. He says become fully convinced in your own mind about divisive issues (v. 5, cp. Rom. 4:21). Becoming fully convinced about even the details of right and wrong is an important part of what we are supposed to desire to do for the Lord (v. 5).

Notes:

Rom. 14:10-12 **4. Explain how Paul's comments about the judgment seat of Christ indicate that Jesus Christ is Yahweh God of the Old Testament.**
2 Cor. 5:10
Phil. 2:10-11

Answer: Paul calls the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10) the judgment seat of God (Rom. 14:10, 12). To give an account to Christ is to give an account to God. Paul also cites Is. 45:23 as a reference to the judgment seat of Christ. There every knee will bow to Yahweh who is Christ (Phil. 2:10-11).

Application: The judgment at the judgment seat of Christ must always be viewed with the perspective of the truth of Rom. 14:4, "and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand." But within that context, an accounting will still take place for things done both good and bad (2 Cor. 5:10). The Lord Jesus will assess our faithfulness, and we will have the opportunity to personally bow the knee to Him and offer Him our praise. This truth ought to motivate us to faithfulness.

Notes:

Keep one another from stumbling (14:13-15:4)

Rom. 5. Instead of judging one another, the goal is to keep one another from stumbling (14:13).
14:13-15:4 Define *stumbling* (14:14, 23), identify how to keep a brother from stumbling (14:15-22;
Ps. 15:1-4), and describe how to best keep yourself from stumbling (v. 14; Ps. 119:165).
119:165
Heb.
5:11-14

Answer: Stumbling is violating one's conscience. It involves doing something that is right when you think that it is wrong (14:14, 23). It is possible to do something wrong when you think you are doing right (ex., Abimelech nearly commits adultery in Gen. 20); this is the opposite of what Paul refers to here. Suppose, for instance, that in the Abimelech story Sarah was merely the sister of Abraham, but Abimelech thought that she was Abraham's wife. He would have still done wrong taking her to be his own. The sin would not have been adultery but the violation of his conscience.

We keep a brother from stumbling in this way by recognizing that our brother needs the knowledge we have before we can ask him to do with us what we do (14:14). We pursue peace by refraining from practicing those things that he believes are wrong until he has had ample opportunity to correct his understanding (14:15-21), and we pursue edification by being true to our own convictions before God while patiently instructing the weaker brother (14:22, 15:1-4).

The Psalmist indicates that we best keep ourselves from stumbling by loving the law of God (Ps. 119:165).

Application: Note that the end game here is edification. It is not that we be satisfied with a lot of weak brothers. A weak brother is edified when he is made strong, and he is made strong when he is instructed in the Scriptures. We need to be both acceptable to God and approved by men (14:18), but eventually men need to adopt what is acceptable to God in order for us to continue to seek their approval. There comes a time when a weak brother should no longer be weak, and the Lord never asks us to encourage perpetual weakness (Heb. 5:11-14).

Note also that no one who fancies himself a teacher ought to be given the benefit of the doubt due a weaker brother. The weaker brothers of Romans 14 were not pastoring the church or leading people to divide from the orthodox body of Christ.

Notes:

Interesting Insight!

Handley Moule on 15:4:

"That is to say, the true 'Author behind the authors' of this mysterious Book watched, guided, effected its construction, from end to end, with the purpose full in His view of instructing for all time the developed Church of Christ. And in particular, He adjusted thus the Old Testament records and commands of 'patience,' the patience which 'suffers and is strong,' suffers and goes forward, and of 'encouragement,' the word which is more than 'consolation,' while it includes it; for it means the voice of positive and enlivening appeal. All parts of the Old Testament are rich in commands to persevere and be of good courage, and in examples of men who were made brave and patient by the power of God in them, as they took Him at His word. And all this, says the apostle, was on purpose, on God's purpose. That varied Book is indeed in this sense one. Not only is it, in its Author's intention, full of Christ; in the same intention it is full of Him for us. We may confidently explore its pages, looking in them first for Christ, and then for ourselves, in our need of peace, and strength, and hope."

H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle to the Romans* (n.p.: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd., 1958; reprint, Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications), 316-317.].

Serve together for God's glory (15:5-13)

Rom. 15:5-13 **6. Serving for God's glory is the third and final key to church unity Paul mentions in this passage, and Christ is the pattern Paul uses here to demonstrate what this kind of unifying service is like (15:5-7). It is a service for the benefit of Jew and Gentile (15:8-9). It is a service motivated by a love for truth and a love for mercy (15:8-9). Finally, it is a service that accomplished two important goals. What were those goals (15:8-12)?**

Answer: The goals of Christ's service for God's glory were (1) to keep the commitments made to the fathers (15:8), (2) to provide the Gentiles with an opportunity to glorify God (vv. 9-12). Our service for God's glory must have the same two characteristics. We must be people who keep the commitments we have made if we are to bring glory to God, and we must be people who desire to evangelize the lost if we are to bring glory to God. These things are critical to our unity as well. When we are unfaithful to our commitments, we create holes in our ministry where there should be cohesiveness. We are unable to glorify God with one voice because there are just too many people missing too much of the time. When we fail to evangelize, we lose sight of our mission. With no burden for the lost, we develop a crankiness toward one another. The surgeon who is busy saving a life in the operating room has little time to argue with his colleagues over who is going to work the late shift. Bob Jones Sr. used to say that it takes evangelistic unction to make orthodoxy function, and Paul here indicates that an evangelistic spirit motivated Christ to come. This is part of what glorified God in His service, and the same must be true of us.

Application: The final benediction prayer of Paul in verse 13 speaks of the hope shared by those who serve God only for His glory. That ultimate goal will be met; God will be glorified in the end. We have great reason to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

Notes: