

# **God's Power for Salvation**

*Seventeen Seminars on Paul's Letter to the Romans*

*David Gooding*

A Myrtlefield House Transcript



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w: [www.myrtlefieldhouse.com](http://www.myrtlefieldhouse.com)

e: [info@myrtlefieldhouse.com](mailto:info@myrtlefieldhouse.com)

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## Understanding Romans as a Whole

It is a great pleasure for me to meet you and to be here with you and to work with you. Our programme shows us that we have four days together in order to study the Epistle to the Romans. What I shall be attempting to do, as far as it depends upon me, is to aim at getting to know Romans as a book; not so much the interpretation of individual verses, but an attempt to come at Romans as a coherent work, and therefore to study its major themes and then to look at the major arguments that are used within each theme in order to prove and illustrate that theme. If we get time, we shall then give attention to the smaller details, at least in some parts of the book.

Let me use an analogy. I have been living in Belfast for nearly fifty years, and I have to confess to you that I never once sat down to learn the name of every one of its streets by heart. Yet I have come to find my way around Belfast, more or less successfully. I do it by mapping out in my mind the major parts of the city and its layout. I have the distinct impression that you have to distinguish between bits that are south of Belfast Lough and bits that are north of it. Therefore when I am going to the international airport, I have to be careful which road I take when I'm in the middle of the city, because I have found to my cost that if you go down one road, it will land you to the south of the lough, when all the time the airport is up beyond the north side. So I have it in my mind: 'that bit over there is south of the lough and that has all sorts of things connected with it like the smaller city airport and so forth. And this bit is north of the lough, and you have to go there if you are going up to the international airport and other places up there.' Then I orientate myself when I am going out the other way and see which way is west. And so I come to know the plan as a *whole*. Then I can work out the details of individual street names.

I want to do that with the Epistle to the Romans. I want to ask: what is the layout of the book as a whole and what are its major themes? So that if you came to me in the middle of the night and woke me up, I would be able to answer you when you said, 'Now, this verse here, "Let all believers be subject to the powers that be," where does that come in Romans?'

I would have to say to myself, 'Wait a minute, what is that? Oh, that's practical stuff. That will be the fourth major section of Romans.'

Then you might ask, 'And when it says "We died with Christ", what is the context of that?'

I would then say, 'Well, that isn't in the first part of Romans, it's in the second major section of Romans.'

That is the kind of thing I mean. So now I proceed to ask, what are the major parts of the Epistle to the Romans?

## Thought flow as the key to understanding the major sections

Any respectable commentary will give you a table of contents of the book of the Bible it is expounding, and the author will lay them out as seems best to him. You only have to look at two or three books on Romans to find that different commentators take different views on how the book is to be analysed.

### The thought flow of the book

I am well aware that the analysis that I am about to give you is open to question and is questioned by nearly every other commentator on the book of Romans, yourself included perhaps. Never mind that. I regard these things as scaffolding round a house, and the scaffolding helps you to get the general shape of the house. When you've built the house, you can take the scaffolding down. That is all that I am offering you now: a scaffolding. But I shall ask, 'How would you decide what the major themes of the book of Romans are?' And the number one principle in my thinking for that is that we are to carefully observe the thought flow; that is, the flow of thought from one verse to another, from one paragraph to another, from one chapter to another. And I shall be asking, 'Where does the theme begin, and where does each theme come to its climax and finale?'

You will say, perhaps, 'What do you mean by *thought flow*?'

It is nothing involved. Suppose you and your friend and myself were sitting in your lounge, and you and your friend were pondering where next to spend your holiday. And you say, 'We are wondering whether to go to the Costa Brava.'

And your friend says, 'No, I wouldn't go there. I'd go to the mountains in Switzerland.'

And I say, 'Well, last year I put weed killer all over my lawn.'

You'd have said, 'Pardon? What's that got to do with anything?'

Have I suddenly gone off on some completely different topic? Or is there in my hazy mind some connection? Is it that you provoked me to think about going on holiday, and I suddenly remembered that, before I went on holiday last year, I put weed killer all over my lawn and so forth and so on? What is the thought flow? Is there any, or isn't there?

### Why thought flow matters

Now, when we take individual verses of Scripture and preach from them, that is a very good thing. I am saying nothing to suggest that isn't a lawful method of interpretation. But if we merely take verses out of their context, we shall get out of the habit of asking what the connection of thought is between them. And if we are properly to listen to the Holy Spirit's argument in Romans, we shall have to pay close attention to what the flow of thought is between one statement and the next, between one verse and the next, between one paragraph and the next, and one chapter and the next, and so forth. We shall need to see where themes begin and when a particular theme comes to its climax.

Now, in Romans it is easy to demonstrate this kind of thematic approach. Let me remind you of chapters 9, 10 and 11. Chapter 8 has ended with a doxology of praise to God for the confidence we have that nothing can separate us from his love. When we come to chapter 9, we have Paul's statement:

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy [Spirit], that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh. (vv. 1-3)

It is self-evident that he has now left the consideration of chapter 8 and is introducing a new subject. Every commentator agrees about it. This is the subject of Israel and its majority rejection of the gospel in Paul's day, and Paul's sorrow of heart on that account. Now chapters 9, 10 and 11 are going to discuss the question of Israel. That is plain to see, isn't it?

When you come to the end of chapter 11, it ends with another doxology, but chapter 12 goes on to talk about something rather different:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (v. 1)

It is an easy example of the use of thought flow (or, following the flow of thought) to begin to see what the major themes are. The major theme of chapters 9, 10 and 11 is Israel and its attitude to the gospel. It is also easy to see what brings this theme to its climax. In chapter 9, Paul is bewailing the fact that the majority in Israel reject the gospel, but by the time he comes to the end of this theme in chapter 11 he says, 'And so *all Israel* shall be saved' (11:26). He comes to a triumphant conclusion of this particular theme, and such is the sense of triumph in his heart that he sings a doxology from verses 33-36, a doxology to the wisdom of God who will arrange all things so that this triumph eventually takes place. It ends, as we see, with a comment on the wisdom of God:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past [finding] out! (v. 33)

It is a paean of praise to the wisdom of God. Thus we come to a climax in this particular theme. We are not surprised then, surely, to find that in chapter 12 he goes on to a different, but also a major, theme.

If that is true of Romans 9, 10 and 11, we must ask about the other parts of the epistle. Are they just one whole? Let's take chapters 1-8. Are they just one undivided, indivisible whole, talking about one major theme, or are chapters 1-8 composed of different major themes?

I am going to make my suggestion as to what these themes are, and then I shall proceed to cover the whole book from that point of view. That is to say, in these early sessions, I shall talk. Store up your questions and your objections. Make notes of your criticisms of the non-sequiturs in my argumentation and how illogical I am and all that kind of thing. Then we shall have a special session today for discussion and argumentation. I want for the moment to advance my thesis.

### **Section one: saved from the wrath of God (1:1-5:11)**

Now, as to the first major theme in the Epistle to the Romans, I start in chapter 1 where Paul is greeting the Romans and telling them he hopes to come to them. Meanwhile, he writes to them, and he is ready to preach the gospel to them.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith: as it is written, 'But the righteous shall live by faith'. (vv. 16–17)

Paul is stating he is not ashamed of his gospel: it is the power of God to salvation. I ask him, therefore: 'Paul, please tell us why we need to be saved anyway. You are so proud of the gospel; you're not ashamed of it, and the reason you're not ashamed of it is "it is the power of God to salvation." You must surely tell us, then, why you think we need to be saved, anyway.'

I suggest that his first reason is given to us immediately in verse 18. Why do we need to be saved?

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness.

Reason number one, why we need to be saved is: because of the wrath of God.

### **Using word studies to help see the thought flow**

Now, as you know, one way of approaching Scripture (I won't say 'trick'), one practical thing that you can use is that if you come across a word in your reading and it appears to you that this word repeats itself several times, well, then get out a concordance and see where that word appears, not only in the New Testament in general but in this epistle in particular. Make sure your concordance lets you see what the underlying Greek is.

In our noble King James Version (God be thanked for it) the translators had it as a matter of literary style that when confronted with the same Greek or the same Hebrew word, they felt it good English style to vary the translation. And that was nice of them because it produces beautiful English, but it is difficult if you are going to study seriously because in that translation you will find different English words used for the same Greek word and then the same English word used for different Greek words, which makes it a little bit difficult. So, get a concordance of some sort. One of the older ones is the *Englishman's Greek Concordance* by Wigram but, like me, it's very old. I'm sure you have modern computer devices that can solve that problem for you. But do a study of the times a word appears in the particular epistle you are studying.

Let me give an example of that by way of encouragement. If you were studying the first Epistle by Timothy, and you came across the word *godliness*, and you looked it up in a concordance based on the Greek, you would find that that particular word occurs in the New Testament about twice, or maybe three times, before you come to 1 Timothy. Then in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus it occurs very frequently, which immediately would alert you to the fact that *godliness* is one of the major themes of the Pastoral Epistles.

### **The wrath of God**

Now we come across this word: the *wrath* of God. It is the first reason why we need to be saved. The word occurs twelve times in the whole epistle but seven times in chapters 1 to 5:11. So, I am going to suggest to you that 'the wrath of God' is one of the major themes of the



opening chapters of Romans. Let's take our Bibles in hand and note the occurrences. First of all:

For the *wrath* of God is revealed from heaven . . . (1:18)

But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up *wrath* for yourself on the day of *wrath* when God's righteous judgement will be revealed. (2:5 ESV)

but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be *wrath* and fury.<sup>1</sup> (2:8 ESV)

But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict *wrath* on us? (3:5 ESV)

For the law brings *wrath*. (4:15 ESV)

And then as we come to what I shall presently suggest is the climax of this part of Romans, we read:

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the *wrath* of God through him. (5:9)

Now, notice the connection of thought between that and the first occurrence. Why do we need to be saved? Why is Paul not ashamed of the gospel? It is because the gospel is the power of God to salvation. Why do I need salvation? It is because the wrath of God is manifest from heaven. That being so, the climax is here in 5:9.

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the *wrath* of God through him.

### **The climax of section one**

As we come to that kind of climax, let us notice the context and some of the detail of this climax.

hope does not put us to shame, because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us. (see 5:5)

#### *The love of God shed abroad in our hearts*

This tremendous emphasis on the love of God by the Holy Spirit is pressed home upon our hearts by a logical argument. It is not a question of feeling: it is a question of logic and consistency in the character of God. God's love for us has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us; and the Holy Spirit sheds it abroad by this argument:

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<sup>1</sup> RV – 'indignation'.

For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: though perhaps even for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God shows his own love . . .

(Do notice we're not talking of our love for God—the love *of* God in that sense, but of God's love *for* us.)

But God shows his own love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. (see vv. 6–9)

It is a logical argument based on the consistency of the character of God. If while we were sinners God gave Christ to die for us, now that we have been justified, do you suppose God would change his mind and exclude us or pour his wrath upon us? The argument is repeated:

For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (v. 10)

The argument, as the logicians would have it, is a *minori ad maius*. Or you might dispute it and say, 'No, it's the other way around; it's from the bigger to the less.' Whichever way round you put it, you can put the argument like this to any congregation of believers you are talking to: 'Tell me; what is the biggest thing that God will ever do for you?'

Then suggest a few things—big things, not small things. He could give you a planet or two to play with when you get home to heaven, or a galaxy to administer. (Incidentally, I hope you don't think we're going to be sitting down on thrones singing every second of eternity.) But once you've asked and they have thought and searched their brains, you can say, 'No, none of those. The biggest thing God will ever do for you is what he has already done. He has given his Son for you.'

God will never give you anything bigger than that, will he? And when did he do it? When did Christ die for you?

You say, 'Well, God waited to see whether I would repent, and then when I repented he said, "Yes, but let's not be hasty. Let's see how you behave, and if you behave jolly well, then I might consider giving my Son for you."'

Well, no, it was not so of course. He gave his Son for us while we were still sinners.

### *The implications of the argument*

That is the thesis. 'Now let's work out its implication' Paul says. If God loved us so much as to give his Son to die for us when we were sinners, now that we have been justified, forgiven, pardoned, and we are accepted, would it be consistent of God to pour out his wrath upon us? No, indeed not.'

Our security is based on the unchangeable character of God. The argument is stated twice over, and it is an argument about the love of God. It is a tremendous climax to this theme of the wrath of God. It has not gone off to talk about something else, for in the climax it says: 'Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved . . .'. Notice the phraseology. It does not say: 'we shall be sure of going to heaven', but that is perfectly true. It

does not say, 'we are sure we have eternal life', though that is perfectly true as well. But this is Paul arguing a case about *the wrath of God*, and therefore when he comes to this climax he puts salvation in those terms: 'Much more then being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved *from the wrath of God* through him.'

I want to suggest, tentatively as far as you are concerned, that one of the first major themes of Romans is this question of the wrath of God, and it is the first reason why we need to be saved. Then its climax is to be found here: 'We shall be saved from the wrath of God' (5:9), and that statement is made in the context of an argument about the consistency of God's character, which provides a tremendous description of God's love.

*The related argument that ends section two*

We have already seen reason for thinking that chapter 8 similarly comes to a climax, because the end of that chapter is followed by the three chapters on Israel that are distinct in their theme. Let's look back again to see how chapter 8 ends and what it is talking about when it ends.

What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? (see 8:31–32)

Let's pause and think. What have I suggested the climax of the first part of chapter 5 was talking about?

'Ah,' you say, 'that's easy. It's talking about God giving his Son to die for us. That was what the basis of the argument was.'

And what is this about? God 'who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all . . .'. That is the number one major posit of fact. Now come the deductions to be drawn from it. If God spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? It is an argument based on the historical fact that God gave his Son for us and did not spare him.

And so the implications of the death of Christ are spelled out:

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies; who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ Jesus that died, more than that, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. (see vv. 33–34)

All of these implications are shown to spring from God's love for us in giving his Son, and they tell of the absolute security that we have in him in spite of persecution. Now look at verse 37:

No, in all these things [even in our persecution and sufferings] we are more than conquerors through him that *loved* us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (vv. 37–39)

So, the end of chapter 8 is vividly similar to those paragraphs at the beginning of chapter 5.

It is on that kind of basis that I will now suggest what are four major themes of the Epistle to the Romans. I am suggesting that Romans has four major themes for all four major compartments, or departments, or however you like to phrase them.

### Four Major Themes in Romans

1. 1:1–5:11	2. 5:12–8:39	3. 9:1–11:36	4. 12:1–16:27
WRATH OF GOD	WRECKAGE OF ADAM'S SIN	FAILURE OF ISRAEL'S FAITH AND SERVICE	APPEAL FOR OUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE
Righteousness apart from the law	Righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in us	Christ is the end of the law for righteousness	Love is the fulfilment of the law
Christ died for us	We died with Christ	Jew/Gentile relations	Jew/Gentile relations
WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD	SAVED IN HOPE	ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED	NOW IS OUR SALVATION NEARER
Hope of the glory of God	Them he also glorified . . . creation delivered	'Life from the dead'	'The day is at hand', 'Satan bruised'
THE LOVE OF GOD (5:5– 11)	THE LOVE OF GOD (8:35–39)	THE WISDOM OF GOD (11:33–36)	THE ONLY WISE GOD (16:27)

#### Salvation from the wrath of God (1:1–5:11)

I suggest that the first major theme runs from 1:1–5:11. One of its central themes is the wrath of God as the reason why we need to be saved. 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It is the power of God to salvation' (1:16). Why do I need it? 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven' (v. 18). And that theme is developed in the chapters that follow, discussing the principles of God's wrath and his judgment. They are solemn and serious chapters, but then they give way to the salvation that God has provided in light of his wrath.

So in these chapters it is salvation from the wrath of God, and the exposition of salvation in this context, namely the context of the wrath of God, comes to its climax in chapter 5: 'We shall be saved from the wrath of God through him' (v. 9). And that climax, and all the certainty connected with it, is argued on the basis of *the love of God* in giving his Son to die for us. It is a logical argument based on the love and character of God. I suggest, therefore, that this part of Romans, from 1:1 to 5:11, forms the first major theme. We trace it through and then watch it come to its climax. Notice the nature of the climax: it is an argument still, based on the love and character of God.

*Discovering the next major theme*

If that is so, what would the next theme be about? We have already noticed that the end of chapter 8 reads similarly like a climax, and it is a climax dealing with our absolute security even in the face of persecution, and it has to deal with the love of God: 'I am persuaded that nothing in the whole universe [or in other universes if there be such] can separate us from *the love of God* which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (see vv. 38–39). And just as at the climax of the first theme, this glorious certainty of being saved from the wrath of God is based on a consideration of God's love in giving Christ to die for us. It is said explicitly: 'While we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (5:8 ESV). So here the climax in chapter 8, and the certainty that it gives us, is based not merely on the love of God (on how nice and kindly God is) but it is based on the historical expression of that love of God: 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?' (v. 32).

You notice the similarity between those two climaxes. There is a similarity in content about the love of God, about the security of the believer; and there is a similarity in logical argument. When we come to consider the preaching of the gospel in the light of this epistle, one of the things that we shall have to talk about is that a believer's assurance is based on the historical fact and on the character of God and on the deductions that can be made from that historical fact as to the nature of God's character and therefore the nature of his love, and so forth. We shall have to talk about it because it will influence our preaching. Assurance of salvation is very much based on *logic* and *historical fact*. It is based on a good deal more, as we shall see elsewhere in the epistle.

But if the climaxes of these two chapters are similar, what is the difference between them?

*Understanding the Bible through differential diagnosis*

Another principle of biblical exegesis and interpretation is the principle of what the medics are apt to talk about as *differential diagnosis*. That sounds very complicated. Therefore the medics deserve their fee if they can understand complicated phrases like that. It sounds impressive. Do they really have to deal with differential diagnosis?

Well, so can anybody. Even the person who puts out the different-coloured bins each week is engaging in differential diagnosis. So, don't begin to tell me this is too difficult. I forget what names the city council has given the blue bin, the brown bin and the black bin: Dolly or Peggy or something. I forget what they are! But all of the stuff is waste anyway. That is the general thing. It is all household waste, so it is all the same in the fact it is waste. Ah, but the city council in their wisdom have asked us to see that, while it's all the same in the fact that it's waste, there are differences between different kinds of waste. And here comes the differential diagnosing: the brown bin is for the garden waste; the blue bin is for plastic milk bottles and tins and things; and the other is a general collection of horrible stuff. This is differential diagnosis.

So, here in Romans, if these two themes come to their climax and the climax is similar, then we have to ask, 'What are the differences?' We must ask because the differences are as important, if not more important, than the similarities. They are more important for the point when you come to expound these different themes.

We have to ask about the beginning, then. If this theme is about the wrath of God as a reason why we need to be saved, what is the second theme about? Is that likewise talking

about why we need to be saved, and if so, how is it in any way different from what chapter 1 said?

### **Salvation from the wreckage of Adam's sin (5:12–8:39)**

Let's take our Bibles in hand once more and look at 5:12.

Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned.

As I see it, this is now giving us a second reason why we need to be saved. Now this is not so much the wrath of God but what you might call the wreckage caused by Adam's primal disobedience—the wreckage it has brought upon the human race. And that, of course, is a somewhat different thing from the wrath of God.

There are, then, two sides to the matter of salvation here. We can pick that up if we take one of the smaller themes of this second section, namely the slaveries (the dictatorships, the dominions) that have come upon us as a result of Adam's sin.

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more *dominion* over him [and therefore over us as well]. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he lives, he lives unto God. Even so reckon you also yourselves to be dead unto sin but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. (6:9–11)

The dominion of death: broken.

For sin shall not have *dominion* over you. (v. 14)

This is the second dominion to be broken.

Or are you ignorant, brethren (for I speak to men that know the law), how that the law has *dominion* over a man as long as he lives. (7:1)

And we read of our escape from it:

Wherefore, my brethren, you also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ. (v. 4)

The dominion of law: broken.

And then to follow on that theme, let's look in chapter 8 where it speaks of setting us free from this principle of sin and death.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. (v. 2)

That principle of sin and death: broken in our case. Or again when he talks about spiritual life:

For you received not the spirit of slavery again unto fear; but you received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father'. (v. 15)

So, whatever other themes come through, I point to one of them here: deliverance from the dominions, tyrannies, bondages and slaveries that were brought on us as a result of the wreckage of Adam's first disobedience.

This second part comes to its climax, as we have already seen. It is not only that we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit shall be delivered one day. We groan in our present state, but we await our redemption, our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. Not only that, but creation herself 'shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God' (see vv. 18–22).

This is the undoing, therefore. Here is salvation in the terms of the undoing of the wreckage caused by Adam's disobedience, and the effect that that has on the subsequent human race and on creation itself, how that shall be put right, and how we shall be glorified together with the Saviour.

### **The failure of Israel's faith and service (9:1–11:36)**

I needn't stress these things any more now because they are common knowledge. We will leave this section for the moment and come back to it in later sessions.

### **Appeal for our spiritual service (12:1–16:27)**

We have one more part of the Epistle to the Romans. What shall we say of chapter 12 to the end? It is obvious that it is going to be about the practical implications of our salvation: how then we ought to live. Let's do what we did with the other three and look at the end of this section.

We have found now that the first major part ends with a statement about the love of God, and the second major part ends with that great statement about the love of God. We found that the three chapters that deal with Israel ended in chapter 11 with a doxology of praise, not now to the love of God but to the *wisdom* of God and the *knowledge* of God. The whole epistle, the final section, ends likewise with a doxology.

Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith . . .

Now hear the doxology:

To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever. Amen. (16:25–27)

And you will notice it is not to the only loving God, but to 'the only wise God'.

So, we have two great themes, two great passages, two great parts, ending with doxologies on the love of God. The other two major parts end with doxologies on the wisdom of God.

I'm sure you've done it before, but if you haven't then I can then envisage you, gentlemen, starting a few praises in your worship meetings (if you have such) that worship God not just for his love. It would make a change, wouldn't it, to start worshipping him for his wisdom? And there is nothing wrong with variety, of course.

So then, we could say, 'Right, that last section is about practical things.' But now I want you to notice one or two things that show, once more, that the epistle is not just a collection of isolated things. Section four here at the end is not, of course, unrelated to what has gone before.

<b>Section One</b> <b>Romans 1:1–5:11</b>	<b>Section Four</b> <b>Romans 12:1–16:27</b>
Their bodies dishonoured (1:24). Depraved mind (1:28).	Present your bodies (12:1). Transformed by the renewing of your mind (12:2).
Neither gave thanks (1:21). Worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator (1:25). The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (1:18). We shall be saved from the wrath (5:9). Abraham . . . was strengthened in his faith (4:20). So that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world be accountable to God—liable to God's punishment (3:19).	I beseech you by the mercies of God (12:1). A living sacrifice . . . acceptable to God . . . your spiritual service (12:1). A minister of God, an avenger for wrath . . . therefore . . . submit . . . not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience sake (13:4–5). Him that is weak in faith (14:1). We shall all stand before God's judgment seat . . . every tongue will confess to God . . . each of us will give an account of himself to God (14:10–12).
While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (5:8). Abraham, father of believers . . . uncircumcised . . . and circumcised (4:11–12).	Christ died, and lived again, that he might be Lord (14:9). Christ a minister of the circumcision . . . and that the Gentiles might glorify God (15:8–9).

Ponder that chart for a moment. In the course of explaining the justice of the wrath of God in part one, Paul talks about the various features of sin that have followed from man's rejection of the Creator. We shall come back to that all in more detail. This is just a summary glance.

*The various effects of sin in section one*

**THE BODY**

Man's rejection of the Creator has affected man's body: 'their bodies . . . dishonoured,' says Paul (1:24).

**THE MIND**

It has perverted their intellect, their rationality and their minds: 'Their foolish minds were darkened' (see vv. 21, 28).



## MOTIVATION

Paul points to a serious flaw in man's character. At first, when you hear it, it sounds like a small thing, but it is absolutely basic: they rejected God, 'neither were thankful' (v. 21). That is a basic flaw in the character of the unregenerate. Surrounded by countless blessings and marvels of creation, including our human bodies and the cells and everything else under the sun, the natural response, which is an inbuilt response in the human heart, is to be *grateful*. It is not something we should have to remind ourselves of. We do have to, yes, but it is something that should be spontaneous. When someone gives you a gift or shows you a kindness, you feel grateful. The normal response of a human being to all the marvels of the Creator's goodness should be gratitude. But if you deny there is a personal Creator, gratitude is very difficult.

How can you possibly be grateful to an atom? 'Oh, atom, I thank you very much.' Or to a cell? 'Oh, marvellous cell, I do feel very grateful to you, cell, because you got rid of the poisons.' It's a bit difficult. And this feature of man's ingratitude to God is fundamental to the doctrine of the fall. It is one of the pernicious, inevitable results of the fall.

## SERVICE

And then it affected what Paul calls their 'service': 'They worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator' (v. 25). The word for service, *latreia*, is almost a priestly word.

## GOD'S WRATH

And, therefore, 'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness' (1:18), and we shall be saved from his wrath (see 5:9). Do remember that.

*The results of salvation in section four*

But now look at the final section. We come to the practical section that deals with the results of salvation and the practical effects on our lives. Notice first the *body*: 'I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies . . .' (12:1). And to do that properly you will need the transforming and renewing of your *mind* (see v. 2).

Notice the effect upon our *motivation* to be grateful: 'I beseech you by the mercies of God . . .'. 'You have to judge it this way: if one died for all, then all died', and so forth and so on.<sup>2</sup> He is talking about our motivation and our service. Paul uses the same word here as he used in chapter 1. He speaks of a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual (or your reasonable, your rational) *service*. It is the same word as in chapter 1.

In section one he talks about *the wrath of God* but now here in a very different context. He talks in section four about the practicalities of government in any country, and that the magistrates are God's servants to execute his *wrath* and therefore to hold some kind of order in community life, which otherwise would be chaotic.

All I am trying to show is that these four major parts of Romans, though they are distinct parts, are linked together in their thought. For the practicalities in chapter 12 onwards are the undoing and the reversal of the effects of man's rejection of God that were delineated in the first major part of the book. That is nothing very profound, but it is worth noticing. It could

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<sup>2</sup> See also the argument Paul makes for loyalty to Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:14–15.

make an introduction to a talk on the practicalities, couldn't it? God's salvation does have a scheme for reversing the effects of the fall.

## **Conclusion**

You say, 'That's nice. Well, it's interesting, at any rate; it's a stimulus before coffee. But what practical use is it?'

Well, I shall be talking about what practical use it is when we come to the individual sections, and why we need now to get those four sections clearly in our minds so that, when it comes to expounding salvation, we state the full case and state it clearly. The number one thing that is now already evident in the preaching of the gospel is this question: why do folks need to be saved?

In my youth, great emphasis was placed upon the wrath of God: 'You need to be saved because of the wrath of God.' In my old age, I seem to notice a lot of evangelism that puts the emphasis slightly differently. 'Are you feeling down in the dumps? I mean, have you been jilted, or what is it? Are you feeling down? Yes? Well, Christ can fill you with joy!' It is that approach to salvation.

Of course, both are true, aren't they? When our Lord talked to Nicodemus in John 3, he mentioned the cross under the simile of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. It was God's judgment on sin. And he spoke of the gift that God gave. He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to die on a cross to suffer that judgment. When he talked in the next chapter to the woman of Samaria, he didn't talk about the cross, did he? Here was a woman deeply dissatisfied, sinful indeed but dissatisfied. He talked to her about the gift of the Holy Spirit and that living water that once she drank of she would never thirst again.

There are two parts of the gospel. But then, because there are two separate parts, we need to get clearly in our minds how those two different parts work and what lies at the heart of them, and not to confuse the two.

## God's Revelation and His Judgment

### *The Justification of God's Wrath—Part 1*

As you know, there is an introduction to the Epistle to the Romans (1:1–7). Important as it is, I do not propose to discuss it at this moment but to proceed to investigate what are the leading themes (and I use the plural now), the leading ideas of the first major section of the book.

### **The leading ideas of section one**

In our first session, we saw the general theme of the wrath of God developed by Paul in his first section of the book, and how it comes to its climax with the explanation of salvation in this context, which is to be *saved from the wrath of God*. When we look at this major section as a whole, we find there are at least five major elements to it. I have listed them here for you.

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1. 1:8–3:20 The justification of God's wrath.
  2. 3:21–31 The claim that man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.
  3. 4:1–17 The validation of that claim: an appeal to the precedent of Abraham's experience.
  4. 4:18–25 The definition of what is meant by faith: the analogy between Abraham's faith and ours.
  5. 5:1–11 The results and implications of justification by faith.
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Half of this major section is taken up from 1:8–3:20 with what I have called the justification of God's wrath or, if you prefer the term, the *statement* of God's wrath and the explanation of the principles that govern God's wrath, and how that wrath is expressed in practice.

The second half of this section goes from 3:21–5:11. And I have laid out its four major parts. First of all there is the claim that man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law (3:21–31). Second, we notice the validation of that claim by appeal to the Old Testament and to the case of Abraham (4:1–17). Here is Paul the lawyer. Having cited the claim that man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law, he now appeals to the case law of the Old Testament and cites the case of Abraham, not as a type but as an actual man walking on two legs on this earth who was historically—at a certain point—justified. And Paul cites the principles upon which Abraham was justified, as cited in the Old Testament: 'And he believed God, and it [that is, his belief in God] "was counted to him for righteousness"' (4:22; cf. Gen 15:6). It is an example from the Old Testament to validate the general point that justification is by faith. He validates it by the citation of an actual instance, a case law, which establishes this: if Abraham

was justified by faith before God, then all others can be and must be justified on that same basis.

Then follows the second half of chapter 4, which gives the definition of what is meant by *faith* (4:18–25). It's all right to declare that man is justified by faith without the works of the law. It's very good to cite case law about how Abraham was justified, but what is meant by faith in this context? Is it also a work that you have to do, and you have to do it at least to seventy-five percent of faith's possibilities or else it doesn't work correctly? Or is it not a work? What is meant by faith?

Here we shall find that Paul once more appeals to Abraham, but this time not as case law; he appeals to him by analogy. After all, when Abraham 'believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness', the matter over which he believed God was that he and Sarah were going to have a son in their old age. Abraham believed God about that, and it was counted to him for righteousness, but surely God doesn't come to us and promise us that we are going to have a son in our old age; and we have to believe that in order to be justified. So, how can you possibly cite Abraham's case, then, and suggest that our faith is parallel to his faith? Paul must answer the question, of course, and answer it he does. He shows that there is indeed a parallel between Abraham's faith and our faith by which we are justified, and he uses the device that we call *analogy*. The analogy is between Abraham's faith and ours.

I am making these points now before we get lost in the detail to try and get across how Paul argues, and what he must argue if he is going to prove his case, and the logical order in which he does so, and how the whole thing unites and coheres to this glorious message—that we are justified by faith and therefore shall be saved from the wrath of God.

Then the first paragraph of chapter 5 deals with the results and implications of justification by faith (vv. 1–11).

That is the scheme, and our job now is to try and see, at least vaguely, the flow of thought between those paragraphs and within them.

## **The wrath of God against all unrighteousness**

We start from the first big item. Let's go back to the great statement of the wrath of God as we have it in chapters 1, 2 and 3, as far as 3:20.

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- |    |                 |                                      |
|----|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. | 1:20; 2:1; 3:19 | Men without excuse.                  |
| 2. | 1:24, 26, 28    | God's wrath now: 'God gave them up'. |
| 3. | 2:5, 16; 3:5    | God's wrath and the day of judgment. |
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It is a serious and solemn statement, and in places we shall have to be very careful about the argumentation. Let us notice the general principle. Verse 18 of chapter 1 says, 'The wrath of God *is revealed* . . .'. It is a present tense. There is a wrath of God that is already revealed and is already working. So we shall find, as we examine the contents of the rest of the chapter.

There is also the wrath of God that shall come in the future, according to 2:5; what is called 'the day of wrath' when God 'shall judge the secrets of men'. As verse 16 says, 'on the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ.' Now, that is a very interesting phrase; let me pause there and call your attention to it.

The judgment of God is part of our gospel message: it is a part of the good news. We need to grasp that. Solemn as it is, it is part of the good news. If you look back to the Old Testament psalms that consider the facts that God is coming to judge and that he will judge the world in righteousness, then the psalmist calls upon all creation to clap hands for sheer joy! Marvellous! God is coming to judge! Shout 'Hurrah!', or better, 'Hallelujah!' We need to get that idea into our heads good and proper because some people get ashamed of the wrath of God, as though he were a sadistic god or something. Put it to yourselves and to your congregations. Would you have man's evil go on forever, unchecked? You really wouldn't have God interfere? The fact that God, one day, shall institute 'the day of judgment' is a glorious gospel message.

Of course, the unconverted partly sense it, don't they? During the war, they were endlessly asking us believers, 'Why doesn't God stop Hitler?' Or they ask why he didn't stop Stalin or Pol Pot or Chairman Mao or Ceaușescu? Not to talk of Enver Hoxha. 'Why didn't God stop them?' If you point it out to those same people that there is going to be a coming judgment, and we all have sinned and come short of God's glory and that therefore they need to repent, they will say, 'Oh no, I'm not that bad, and God isn't so hard that he would punish anybody forever in hell.'

Oh, I see. There's an ambivalence, isn't there, in people's attitude to the question of God's judgment and his wrath? But it is part of our Christian gospel.

### **Without excuse?**

Let's look now at the detail of chapters 1, 2 and 3. Paul will argue that we are not only sinners, and all of us sinners, but that we are *guilty* sinners, that is, we are *blameworthy*.

Now, let me interject something here just to alert you, and then we will consider it on another occasion. When we come to the second major part of the book, which discusses the wreckage caused by Adam's sin, then we shall face a situation of wreckage in ourselves and other people, and (I say it taking courage in both hands) that isn't our individual fault. There are those indeed who would tell us that we are guilty of Adam's sin and that when he sinned, we sinned, and therefore God holds us responsible because we sinned when Adam sinned. That, I judge, is quite false. As we shall find it in this passage about his wrath; God is careful to point out where responsibility lies. Here it is going to show that we are not only sinners but we are guilty sinners; we are blameworthy. The second section of the book will talk about the wreckage for which we are not altogether responsible. Having made that point vaguely, and the importance of distinguishing between Paul's first section and the second, let me proceed with this theme.

Man is not only a sinner but guilty. So you have it where Paul is talking about man's reaction to the evidence of creation. He states:

For the invisible things of [God] since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; [in order] that they may be without excuse. (1:20)

This question of the judgment of God and God's judgment being fair and just inevitably raises the question: 'If you are going to accuse men of being sinners, is it their fault, or not? Can somebody say, "But it's not my fault"?' It is the question of excuse.

*The Judge saying what we can be blamed for*

To show you how important that is to this question of judgment, I want you to turn with me to John 9. This is our Lord speaking. As you remember, in John 5 he declared that he is to be the judge at the final judgment, because the Father judges no man. He has given authority for all judgment to the Son, that people should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. When he speaks on these matters, he speaks as the final judge from whose verdict there is no appeal (see 5:19–29). Now he says in John 9:

'For judgement came I into this world, that they which see not may see; and that they which see may become blind.' Those of the Pharisees that were with him heard these things, and said unto him, 'Are we also blind?' Jesus said unto them, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin.' (vv. 39–41)

Literally that last phrase is: 'you would have no sin.' But pray notice what that means in John's writing. The phrase to 'have no sin' does not mean that you are sinlessly perfect: no one is that. To 'have no sin' means that 'you are not *culpable*'; you are 'not to be blamed for' something. If you have no legs and can't walk, you are not to be blamed for not walking. If you were born blind physically, you can't be blamed for not seeing. So, he says here: 'If you were blind, you would not be blameworthy, but now you say "We see". Therefore your sin remains.' That is, 'you are responsible and will be blamed'.

In the context, the Pharisees had just said, 'We *know* this man is a sinner.'

Really? They could see that much, could they?

They were not merely saying, 'We don't understand any of this.' Common sense must have told them that this was an act of the Creator and was certainly not sinful. But, faced with the miracle that had been utterly unique in the whole of human history as far as they knew, from creation onwards, they held, and persisted in holding, that they *knew* that this Jesus was a sinner. They professed to see, so they will be held responsible for what they said they saw, and the grounds on which they saw it.

Look now at John 15:

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin [they wouldn't be blameworthy]: but now they have no excuse for their sin. (v. 22)

Now, here is the word that Paul repeats in Romans: 'that they might be without excuse', but notice the context here in John. He is saying, 'If I had not come and spoken to them, they could not be blamed for not believing what they had never heard, for what I never said.' Could they be blamed for not believing what Jesus said, if they could honestly reply, 'But he didn't come to us. We never heard him say it. We didn't know he said it'? That would be an excuse, wouldn't it? He says, 'But I have come, and I have spoken to them. Now, they have no excuse.' He repeats it:

If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin [they would not be blameworthy]: but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.  
(v. 24)

They are without excuse, therefore. Notice these statements by the judge himself, for God's judgment is just.

### **How God has made the truth known**

So do we see it here in the first instance. It is man's attitude to the evidence of creation:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold down the truth in unrighteousness. (Rom 1:18)

For that charge to be valid, the men must have known the truth, because they are charged with suppressing the truth—holding it down in unrighteousness. But do they know the truth? Oh yes, they know the truth! How? Number one:

Because that which may be known of God is manifest *in* them;

Number two:

for God manifested it *to* them. (v. 19)

Notice the double description. There is the evidence of creation: the truth as demonstrated, as revealed in, creation. It isn't left to men whether they deduce it or not. God has revealed it *to them*; he has given this demonstration by the very fact of creation and what can be seen in creation. Ah, yes, but more than that. He has manifested it *in them*, which is very important. God has put a consciousness of the Creator into the heart of every human being. That is the charge.

Incidentally, in case I forget to tell you in the course of the next four weeks, there is a very interesting book written by a certain Budziszewski. The title of his book is *What We Can't Not Know*. His thesis is that there are certain things that every human being knows and cannot *not* know. It is a very interesting book and, among other things, talks of these chapters in Romans.

Here is Scripture saying that the awareness that there is a creator has been revealed by God *to* men by dint of the creation, but also revealed *in* them. You will get atheists from time to time saying that when they go out and look upon the stars in the night sky they have an overwhelming impression that there is a Creator God. That consciousness is put there by God, of course, so that things like the stars of the night sky stimulate that awareness into action.

Now Paul goes on to explain what this revelation involves:

For the invisible things of [God] from the time of the creation onwards are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made (v. 20)

This is not something that you have to come at, and only eventually come to see, by hard, rigorous chains of logical reasoning, which are far beyond the possibilities of many human

beings. These things are perceived by direct intuition. You see that a rose is beautiful. Well, if you don't, how would I go about proving it to you? What kind of logic would I bring to bear upon it to prove that a rose is beautiful? You see it. There are certain things that can be *directly* seen and known, and one of the things is that there is a creator. Some things 'are clearly seen being perceived through the things that have been made'.

### **The truth that God has made known**

Now notice the things that are specified. It does not say that you can deduce the *love* of God from looking at creation. Did you notice that? What are the two things that can be perceived and deduced from looking at creation? One: God's everlasting power. Two: his godhood.

It does not say 'his godhead'. Please, I shall have to ask you to make that distinction. When we talk about the *godhead* we are talking about the Trinity—the fact that in God there are three (what we call) persons. That is what is meant by 'the godhead'. When we talk about *godhood*, we mean the essence, the being—the quality of being, God.

What is revealed by creation is his *godhood* and his *everlasting power*. It was known to the ancients, as it is known to us, that the stars did not begin to shine when any one of us were born! Have you realized that yet? This vast power that keeps them going is what is described here as the 'everlasting power'. These things are revealed so that 'they may be without excuse'.

You will often be attacked and opposed by those who call attention to things like the tsunami that struck in the Indian Ocean recently. They will say, 'If there's a God, why does he allow these things to happen?' And they question his love: 'How could an almighty, all-wise, all-loving god allow such things to happen?'

There are of course some things that can be said in that direction, and need to be said, but here we notice Paul is not claiming that the love of God can be read from the physical creation around us, but rather his power and his godhood. And the charge is that, 'knowing God', man knows, but doesn't like to admit he knows. And we repeat that this knowledge is instinctive in the sense that it is inbuilt—God has put it in man. The verse says, 'knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks' (v. 21). Acknowledging that there is a creator is to acknowledge that we have a debt of gratitude to him and are responsible for being grateful.

### **The results of rejecting the truth**

#### *Step one: the effect on our rationality*

The result of that basic denial of the fact has its first repercussion on their reasonings. Notice what comes first. The first repercussion observed is not on their sexual immorality: that will come later; but the denial of the existence of a creator and his claim upon us has its first effect on the rational powers and reasoning processes, because they 'became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools' (vv. 21–22). For our very rationality depends on the fact that it comes from a personal, rational creator. If it doesn't, where do our rational powers come from? If there is no personal, rational creator who created our rational powers deliberately, then the only other possibility is that they come from mindless, purposeless, impersonal forces that, in the words



of one atheist of recent times, 'are not aware of us'. They have produced us but are not aware of us. Worse than that, if our rational powers are the result of mindless forces who are not even aware of what they have produced, the other extreme is true. One of these days, those same irrational, non-rational, non-purposeful, impersonal forces will destroy us. Every scientist agrees with it. They will destroy us personally and destroy what we are pleased to call our rationality; and when they've done it they won't know they've done it either. That is a remarkable conclusion for rationality to come to. If rationality at the beginning is baseless and at the end futile and a prisoner in this universe, human rationality would be a prisoner of irrational, mindless forces. So, the denial of a creator has its first implication for our rationality.

I am not saying that atheists are by definition unintelligent. I am saying what it does to your reasoning powers, if you start from the premise that there is no God and our rationality is the product of mindless forces. But more than that, in Paul's day they 'changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things' (v. 23). You can sum that up as Paul does: they 'worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator' (v. 25).

This was the ancient world suppressing their knowledge of the one true God. They didn't always manage to hide it completely. Many a missionary has reported of African tribes that are quite aware that there is one chief god; only they never worship him; they don't offer sacrifices to him. They are concerned with the lesser deities and spirits. Hinduism has thousands of temples, but rarely, if ever, a temple to what they call *Brahman*, the one who is behind everything. They don't worship him; their temples are to lesser deities.

The ancient world, suppressing the truth of the Creator, then turned to the deification of the forces of nature, after the deification of man, and then of birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Modern atheists in the West don't worship birds (at least I think not); but they are guilty of the same things. If you ask them: 'What are the ultimate forces that brought human beings into being and will be responsible for their end?' they will reply, 'The forces of nature: the weak atomic power, the strong atomic power, electromagnetism, gravity and biochemical processes.' They are all mechanisms of nature, the forces of nature, and all of them are impersonal. The modern atheist is deifying them as the absolute powers. It doesn't matter that they don't call them 'gods'; it amounts to the same thing when they give that as the answer to this question.

There is one scientist among thousands that I may quote, and that is Professor Paul Davies, professor of mathematical physics in Newcastle in Britain who went to Australia. He is the author of many books at the high popular level. It was he who wrote the book and started the movement *God and the New Physics*, which he published about twenty or thirty years ago. He tells us, in one of his further books, that he did it on purpose to prod the old establishment in science and get them thinking. He didn't believe in God himself, anyway. But he wants to argue that the universe is rational 'all the way down'. That is, if you look at biochemical systems, you can see the laws of biochemistry that are behind their performance. Then, at the lower level, you can see the laws of arithmetic, and you can perceive that this universe works according to what we know as the laws of arithmetic. That is, the workings of the universe can be explained in terms of mathematical laws. And unlike many others who say that when you come down to the big black hole, all the laws break down so you can't know what's

beyond, Davies wants to claim that the laws of mathematics do not break down, and that the universe is rational right down to what he calls *metaphysics*, that is, the principles behind the physics of the universe.

You will say, 'There's hope for Davies, then, if he believes that the universe is rational all the way down, even to metaphysics. Presumably he believes in God, then.'

But when asked the question, he says outright, 'No, I don't want there to be a God.' That is not a scientific statement; that is a statement of his preference.

Well, what brought about the universe then?

He says, 'Well, perhaps there are some mathematical laws so clever that they brought the universe into existence.'

Well, some days I wish there were such mathematical laws, and I would call upon them to put a whole lot of money, a few million, in my bank account. If these very clever mathematical laws can create a whole universe, it would be nothing for them to create a few million in there. The whole thing is stupid, isn't it? 'Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools' (v. 22).

Davies doesn't like the idea of a God, he says, because if God speaks to us, that involves moving atoms around in our brains. Well, what's wrong with God doing that? He made the atoms. And anyway, I say, what happens when you speak to your neighbour? Aren't you moving a few atoms in his brain? Of course you are. The information you transmit can make the atoms in his brain move around to comprehend what you are saying. Other information could make you smile, or break your heart. And if we can move a few atoms around, why should anybody object to the Creator moving a few atoms around in our brains? How else would anybody say anything? 'Professing themselves to be wise,' says Scripture, 'they become vain in their reasonings' (see vv. 20–22). Denying the Creator, the creator of rationality, has this effect on our rational processes.<sup>3</sup>

*Step two: God gave them up to the dishonouring of the body*

In the second place, certain other things follow because they took this attitude. Notice the solemnity: 'Therefore God gave them up' (v. 24). This is the judgment of God already revealed. If you deny the Creator in this sense, presently the judgments of God will give you up to do these other things.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonoured among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.  
(vv. 24–25)

Dishonoured their bodies? Yes, indeed, yes. The Bible declares man is made in the image of God. If Stalin had believed that, he perhaps wouldn't have murdered about fifty million people, and Hitler likewise wouldn't have murdered millions. For what is the worth of a

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<sup>3</sup> For a fuller discussion of Davies' viewpoint and the issues involved see Chapter 3 in David Gooding and John Lennox's book *Finding Ultimate Reality*, Myrtlefield House: 2018.

human body anyway? What value has it? In the old fashioned sense of the term, what is the *dignity* of a human body?

You will notice that wherever atheism prevails one of the things that is undercut is the dignity of the human body. That is not to say that all atheists are immoral, because when atheists deny God they very often try to hold onto the values that are based on God; they try to have them without God himself. But if you deny the Creator, it not only has an effect on reasoning; it will have an effect on the body. They 'worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever' (v. 25). It isn't necessarily that they despised the body, but they put the body and things material in the place of worship in their hearts, as distinct from worshipping the Creator. That is an insult to the Creator of course. So the second step: God gave them up.

*Step three: God gave them up to dishonourable passions*

The next step is that God gave them up unto vile passions, and those are listed in front of us (vv. 26–27). And the more the West goes to the denial of God, the more you will see the increase of these perversions of sex, because sex is a created process of God to be held in honour. But when men deny the source of it in God and the purpose for which he made it, it leads to these perversions.

The rejection of God leads not only to the devaluation of rationality (the processes of reasoning), not only to perversions of our hearts' worship to be spent on things that are not worthy (instead of on God), it has the effect of perverting sexuality. But now it comes to the effect on our moral judgment.

*Step four: God gave them up to reprobate minds*

Rationality is not the same as moral judgment. Verse 28 says, 'even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind . . .'. They not only do these things that are now listed in verses 28–31 but, 'knowing the ordinance of God, that they who practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them' (v. 32).

Do beware, gentlemen, that if you preach against homosexuality and you have homosexuals in your congregation, they can sue you in court in some countries because it will be alleged you have shown hatred to homosexuals and discriminated against them. And, in some countries, if you found out that a professing member of the church who professed to be a believer was a practising homosexual, and you excommunicated them, they could sue you in court. For the moral judgment has gone so far as not just to say, 'These folks do these things,' but to consent with them. When the law of the land consents with it, things can become difficult for those who are called upon to proclaim God's word.

Notice this giving them up to a reprobate mind is part of the judgment of God. It doesn't say, 'Because they have a reprobate mind, God will then judge them'. This is one of God's judgments as they work out in life. If you put your hand in the fire, it will be burned. God has given us electricity, but watch how you use it because it can destroy you if you use it wrongly. It is 'in the nature of things', as we say. And because this creation comes from God, and he upholds it, then if people deliberately and knowingly deny him and proceed to live accordingly, then they will see his judgments show themselves in these consequences.

*Summary of the arguments in Romans 1*

Here, therefore, men are sinners and without excuse, as you see it is said explicitly. They are without excuse because the basic evidence is available to them, whatever they say. Through creation God has manifested two things about himself: his everlasting power and his godhood. Though you hold it down deliberately, underneath you know it. And if you hold it down, God has so ordered things that these judgments will follow.

**The wrath of God in Romans 2**

In chapter 2 we have 'the case against the moralists', as the old commentators used to say. That is one way of putting it, for in the first chapter we have had God's witness in the heart that there is a creator. Now we go further to the moral law, not merely knowledge that there is a creator but the knowledge of certain basic moral principles.

*The law written on the heart*

Verses 14–15 are going to say this explicitly.

For when Gentiles, which have no law . . .

(That is, no *revealed* law such as Israel had at Mount Sinai.)

do by nature the things of the law . . .

(As they often do.)

are a law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written on their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them.

And we come back to the first verse of chapter 2: 'Therefore you are without excuse, O man,' for the biblical position is that all men know certain basic moral laws. Whether they acknowledge it or not, whether they agree or whether they deny it, the fact is that all human beings know certain basic moral laws.

A distinction is made here between the highly developed revealed law of God as revealed to Moses, and certain moral principles. The law revealed to Moses is a highly developed thing. Similarly, God's word doesn't say that everybody knows all the laws of civilized, developed cultures with the endless precisions of their law: civil, criminal and so forth. It does say that there are certain moral principles that everyone knows because they are written on the heart.

Note the term: *heart*. You must distinguish between 'heart' and what is next said: 'conscience' (v. 15). They are written on 'their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness'. And then their moral thinking: 'their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing'. This is why they are without excuse.

Let's get that basic principle clear in our heads. In many philosophical and ethical discussions, this view of ethics is often called *natural law*. That title has certain disadvantages, but it will do for the present. It means a certain law written on the human heart by the Creator. It doesn't mean that every baby, the moment it is born, knows these moral laws, of course not,

any more than a baby knows that one and one makes two. But when a teacher proceeds to tell a child that one and one makes two, the child perceives it and sees it for himself. And it is no good saying, 'Well, I believe that because the teacher told me.' The teacher only pointed out what is universally true, and human beings see it.

So, there are certain things written on the human heart. Let me take one of them, arbitrarily, for a moment: fairness. Suppose some businessman or other did something to you, and you complained to him: 'Look here, this is not fair!'

And he said, 'I don't know what you mean. What do you mean, "fair"? I have no concept of fairness. What is fairness? I've never heard of it. I don't try to be fair. There isn't such a thing as fairness. I can't understand what you're talking about.'

If that were true, we couldn't begin any ethical discussion, for all ethical discussion depends on our having a basic concept that we all have of *fairness*.

## The details of Romans 2

We'll come to the specific things that we can know, but let's first attend to the details of chapter 2. 'Therefore you are without excuse, O man . . .' (v. 1). Now we are thinking about being without excuse in this moral area—in ethics.

How is he without excuse? Notice the phrase again, please. We are sinners, but we are *guilty* sinners who have no excuse for our sinning. Why? Because we know what sinning is. We know there is such a thing as right and wrong, and we show it.

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgement on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practise the very same things. (v. 1  
ESV)

Or, as verse 15 puts it: 'their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing.' The fact that we do accuse other people shows we have a standard of moral behaviour that we expect other people to have, and we all endlessly accuse other people of doing wrong, or we excuse other people.

Mrs Brown says to Mrs Blue, 'Have you heard?'

'Heard what?'

'Well, Mrs Green has run off with Mr White's wife.'

'Oh, she oughtn't to have done that.'

It is an accusation, isn't it? So, there is an awareness on the part of both parties that this is wrong.

Then says Mrs Brown, 'Ah, yes, but her husband was an impossible chap.'

Oh, so now she is excusing. Why bother to excuse anybody if there is no basic rule or law? The very fact that humans *accuse* and *excuse* shows they are conscious of a basic moral law. And if that moral law is inbuilt in us, we know (it's no good pretending we don't know) 'that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practise such things' (v. 2). There is a truth in these matters, and the very fact you accuse shows that you believe there is a truth ('she oughtn't to have done it.'). There is a rule, a law, and we show that we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those that practise such things.

*Truth and postmodernism*

I have to warn you at this stage against postmodernism. Is there anybody here who hasn't heard of postmodernism? Yes, you all know about postmodernism, as distinct from modernism. Modernism made human rationality, human wisdom, the final judge of everything, God included. Postmodernism says that there is no ultimate truth. There is no ultimate right or wrong, and all ethics and morality is socially determined.

So, a young man who once professed to be a believer was brought to me by his friend about two years ago. He had been a missionary on the field and came back and did a course, in Oxford I think. By the time he reached me, he didn't believe anything. He said, 'For me, all morality is socially determined.'

I said, 'What about cannibalism, then? Is that okay?'

'Yes,' he said. 'If a person's society approves of it, no other society has the right to say the person is wrong. It is socially determined, and therefore we should be tolerant of people. What may appear to you to be wrong, well, let it be wrong to you, but don't expose it as wrong to anybody else. And for you to say that what is wrong for you is wrong for everybody is the height of intolerance, and you should not be guilty of intolerance.'

It is curious, of course, how they don't believe it in life. They believe it when they're in the classroom teaching ethics, but in actual daily life they don't believe it. For the good professor of this theory will go down to the bank and say, 'I put \$10,000 in the bank.'

The bank manager says, 'No, it's only \$1,000 in the bank. I think you're wrong, therefore. You've only \$1,000. You think you have \$10,000 but you're wrong.'

'No,' says the man, 'I'm right and you're wrong.'

And then what does he say?

'Oh, well, I mustn't say you're wrong, of course. There's no such thing as absolute truth. So if you say I have only \$1,000, well, I mustn't say, "No, I have \$10,000."'

They don't, do they? They don't live it. No, but they say they are against intolerance and forcing your views on other people. You shouldn't be intolerant. Well, Pol Pot was rather intolerant of intellectuals. We all know that. If you wore spectacles, you were in danger because it was the intellectual class that wore spectacles, and Pol Pot was intolerant of intellectuals, so he massacred some thousands of them. What shall we say of his view? Shall we say, 'We mustn't be intolerant, so we mustn't say Pol Pot was wrong. So we mustn't be intolerant of his intolerance. You must allow intolerance'?

It's sort of contradictory, isn't it? To lay it down as a universal truth: 'All morality is socially determined', and then to add 'there are no absolute truths', is, of course, a logical contradiction. If there are no absolute truths, then you had better ask, 'Is it an absolute truth that *all* morality is socially determined? Is that absolute?' Sounds like it: 'All morality is socially determined.' But if it's an absolute truth, there is at least one absolute truth, and to deny there is anything such as absolute truth contradicts their very theory.

There is an absolute truth, and God's judgment is according to absolute truth. And because of this: 'Do you reckon this, do you calculate this, O man . . .'

Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practise such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgement of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his

kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgement will be revealed. (vv. 3-5 ESV)

If we believe that there is such a thing as right and wrong, and we show we do by our accusing and then excusing ourselves, and others, then we are acknowledging that the judgment of God is according to truth. There are things that people do and we say they are wrong. And we have done them, and we know them to be wrong. God's judgment, then, is according to truth.

There is, therefore, a danger that we misinterpret the fact that God does not immediately send out his judgment upon us but is longsuffering, and we misread his longsuffering as though our sins didn't matter and God is lackadaisical and so forth, whereas the opposite is true. God is good. He is forbearing. He is longsuffering; and that longsuffering is meant to lead us to repentance. Whereas if we do not repent, day by day we are, so to speak, treasuring up (what an oxymoron that sounds) for ourselves wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

#### *Judged according to their works*

Therefore, we are without excuse. But then the fact is stated that, '[God] will render to every man according to his works' (v. 6). This is the evidence upon which God will judge people. He will judge them according to their works.

Now, that is a very interesting statement. Later on, the passage will say that God shall judge the secrets of men, that is, he will expose their hearts and their motivations. But the prime evidence is the evidence of works. What that entails we must take seriously, but we shall have to do it in our next session.

It is important that we hear the case against the sinner before we come to hear the salvation that God has provided in this context, for we don't have to stand on the corner and preach fire and brimstone, necessarily. If God leads you to do it, do it. But we do have to convict this modern world of sin and do it, not with inflamed passion, but with cool logic, love and compassion, with honesty and justice. Somehow we must bring to people that they do need to be saved because of what is meant by 'the wrath of God'. He is not some horrible monster that now and again loses his temper. The judgment of God is not unfeeling, but the judgment of God is according to truth, and God is just.

So, we shall give some time to this explanation of the principles upon which the judgment of God rests before we come to the principles upon which justification rests.

## God's Judgment and the Moralist

### *The Justification of God's Wrath—Part 2*

#### **Our studies so far**

When we broke off, we were discussing the judgments of God and their justification; that is to say, the statements of the judgments of God that maintain that man is not only a sinner but a guilty sinner. Paul therefore discusses the evidence that man has and the way mankind has treated that evidence, and because he has had the evidence, he will be held responsible for how he has treated that evidence.

#### *The evidence to pagans*

We considered what many commentators have called 'the evidence against the pagan'. Those terms are understandable, I suppose, but they are a little irrelevant nowadays because countries like England are fast becoming as pagan as the ancient pagan world was, in many respects. So, here is 'mankind in general' first of all, and their attitude to the Creator, the evidence of creation and what they have done with it. Those who deliberately reject that evidence find the judgment of God operative in that it has some inevitable consequences. For the viewpoint that there is no Creator God affects man's rational systems, and from that, it goes on to our evaluation of the human body and its dignity. It is then liable to go on to perversions of sexual processes. Finally, it affects people's moral judgments.

#### *The evidence to moralists*

From that, we moved on to consider what, in the ancient world, you would have called the moralists. There were many, of course, and we should not despise them. It was not Christians who were the first ones to think seriously about ethics and morality. In the West, Greek philosophers came to think about these things very early on. It happened because in what was then Asia Minor, and then mainly in Greece, people began to wonder what this universe was made of and how it worked. And from doing that, they made their theories.

Some of them are very interesting still. It was Greeks (Democritus and Leucippus) who invented the atomic theory, for instance; and they were bright geniuses indeed for perceiving that the universe is made up of tiny bodies which they called *atoms* because they held they could not be split (*atomos* means 'not cuttable'). We know nowadays, of course, that atoms can be split, but what they came up with was a genius of an insight into how the universe works: that the universe is made of atoms.

Then people like Socrates began to say it is helpful to know how the universe works, but what is the *purpose* of the universe? More important than knowing how the universe works is



how we ought to behave. So began the moral philosophy in civilized Europe, and they came up with their theories of morality. They are not to be laughed at. When Paul addressed the Stoics and the Epicureans of the Areopagus in Athens, he showed himself knowledgeable of what those two systems of philosophy held (Acts 17). And the great big systems of philosophy normally held a system of ethics related to what they conceived to be the way the universe works.

Chapter 2 of Romans is written to moralists of any kind, to people who have a genuine concern for morality. We ought not to talk, in our Christian public places or in private, as though all atheists were the worst of immoral people. There are many atheists who spend much time thinking about morality and what system of morality to follow, whether you would follow that of Jeremy Bentham — *utilitarianism*; or whether you would follow the more rigorous ethical philosophies of Kant, or the more recent ones — the caring philosophies. As Christians, it does us no harm to be aware of the fact that some of the pagans have thought about morality and ethics far more than the average Christian thinks about it.

But, now, here in Romans 2 we are thinking about morality as a topic and as a whole. These are moral people; nevertheless Paul says here that they are not only sinners but guilty sinners, and we went through some of his early arguments on this score.

## **Evidence against the moralists continued (2:1-16)**

### **Judgment according to works**

We come to Paul's basic statement that, in his judgment in the day of wrath, God will 'render to every man according to his *works*' (2:6). As Christians we need to think about that.

What follows is not Paul saying how we can be saved; he is about to tell us in chapter 3 that salvation is not by works. But God's *judgment* is according to works. And the final judgment, as described in the book of the Revelation, is exceedingly careful in this matter when it says that the dead shall be raised and judged according to their works. The description of the final judgment in the book of the Revelation is written (as all Scripture is) with very careful and precise language. It is at the end of Revelation 20.

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. (v. 12)

So the books are opened, the works registered; and the dead are judged 'according to their works'. That is repeated in the next verse:

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. (vv. 13-14)

### **A question of evidence**

Our Lord Jesus is on record as saying (and pray remember he shall be the final judge) it shall be more tolerable to some in the day of judgment than for others (Matt 11:22). The way he phrased it is interesting. He doesn't say it shall be 'harder for some than for others'. He says it shall be 'more tolerable' for some than for others. He knows; he shall be the judge.

If you examine the context of his statement on that judgment, you will find that in it is a question of how much evidence they had and what they did with the evidence. For instance, our Lord said that the Queen of Sheba shall stand up in the judgment with this generation (12:42). The term 'stand up in the judgment' is, of course, an expression you would use in an ancient court where the prosecution witness would stand up and have his say. Then witnesses would be called, and the witness would stand up and have his say. And in the judgment, said Christ, the Queen of Sheba will 'stand up against' this generation. That is, she will be called as a witness. And the men of Nineveh shall 'stand up in the judgment' (v. 41). That is, they shall be called as witnesses, or cited as witnesses. What for? To establish whether the men of places such as Capernaum had enough evidence so that they can be accused of wilfully rejecting the evidence.<sup>4</sup> For all the Queen of Sheba had to go on was a rumour in her country that there was a king called Solomon who was endowed with wisdom by God. She came all those hundreds of miles from her native land to seek it; such was her concern to seek the wisdom that is necessary for kings and queens to have, and which she heard that Solomon had in abundance, as given by God (1 Kings 10). She came to hear it, 'And a greater than Solomon is here,' said our Lord, 'in the streets of Capernaum.' And many of the people couldn't be bothered to cross the doorstep of their houses to listen to him. Many of those who did hear him, rejected him.

The men of Nineveh shall be cited as witnesses. They had the preaching of Jonah, a man that had been down in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, and now was cast out on land. He preached, and the men of Nineveh repented, at least for the time being. But the one who stood on the streets of Capernaum was one greater than Jonah. And there would be the final evidence of his death, burial and resurrection.

The question at the final judgment will be: 'Did they have enough evidence?' That will also determine what the judgment shall be. So, it is a question of works and evidence.

### **A question of works**

Therefore, verses 7–11 are continuing this theme that judgment is according to works.

To them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious [or, selfish], and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that works evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory and honour and peace to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God. (2:7–11)

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<sup>4</sup> See the fuller context of the discussion that runs from Matthew 10–12.

Now, many Christians (and Evangelicals in particular) who come across these verses are at first nonplussed, for Paul seems to be contradicting what he is about to say in chapter 3. There he says that salvation is not by works. How can he say here that to those that 'by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption' there is eternal life? All sorts of theories are advanced as to how to reconcile the apparent difference between this passage and what shall be said in chapter 3.

### *The case of Cornelius*

We can help ourselves by noticing a particular case, related in the Acts of the Apostles, and what the Apostle Peter said about it. And it is proper to quote it here because of what verse 9 says at the end: 'of the Jew first and also of the Greek', and verses 10–11: 'to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God.' That is highly appropriate to the case of Cornelius.

You will remember Cornelius was a Roman centurion. He was a pagan, you might say, but he was a man that feared God. And one day an angel came to him and said certain things. In case you should think I am making it up, I had better read to you what Acts actually says, or in particular what this angel said. I want to warn you in advance that I am not to be held responsible for what angels say.

Now there was a certain man in Caesarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always. (10:1–2)

He wasn't yet a Christian, was he? In our terminology he hadn't yet been 'born again', nor had he received the Holy Spirit, as becomes evident at the end of the chapter when, of course, he did receive the Holy Spirit. But he is described as a man that feared God, who gave alms to people, loved his neighbour, and prayed to God always.

He saw in a vision openly, as it were about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him, 'Cornelius.' And he, fastening his eyes upon him, and being afraid, said, 'What is it, Lord?' And he said unto him, 'Your prayers and your alms are gone up for a memorial before God.' (vv. 3–4)

Now, what shall we say about this angel? Shall we say, 'He's not an Evangelical angel, obviously—telling this non-Christian man that his alms and prayers have gone up as a memorial before God!'

But, of course, what the angel said is true. I am very glad in my heart, even at this distance in the centuries, that when Peter came to Cornelius' house, he said, as he met him:

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that fears him, and works righteousness, is acceptable to him. (vv. 34–35)

Really? Well of course, yes. I am so glad that Peter didn't say, 'Look here, Cornelius. All your alms giving and prayers, you know, your righteousnesses, they're as filthy rags before God!'

I'm glad he didn't say that, because Cornelius might have answered: 'That's unusual. That is extraordinary, Peter, because, with due respect, I had an angel here the other day, and he said my prayers and alms have come up to God for a memorial! Are you sure my prayers and alms are "filthy rags", as you say?'

Well, in God's absolute scales, they all come short, don't they? We cannot gain salvation that way. But God is looking at the man's heart and what the man is *seeking* for. God takes the evidence of his works, and acknowledges it. And because God took notice of Cornelius' prayers and his works and what he was seeking after, God sent him Peter to bring him to the knowledge of the gospel. And you will soon see how genuine this man was, when Peter preached, as he does towards the end, that Jesus Christ was crucified.

Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he charged us to preach unto the people, and to testify that this is he which is ordained of God to be the Judge of living and dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believes on him shall receive forgiveness of sins. (vv. 40-43)

You will notice that at that point, Cornelius didn't say, 'Now look here, Peter, don't be rude. I'm not that much of a sinner. You Jews might count me a sinner, but I'm not that much of a sinner! I don't need salvation.' No, of course he didn't. He didn't start prating about his good works, but gladly heard the message of Christ crucified and risen, through whom God can grant us forgiveness and eternal life. He believed, and God gave him the Spirit. He was born again, as we would say.

Do notice the procedure and the processes that led to it. God watches people's works as evidence of their hearts and what they are seeking for. And if God moved Peter to go to Cornelius, in answer, in response to, Cornelius's alms, prayers and seeking of God, we may be sure of what Paul adds in Romans, that God is 'no respecter of persons'. All of our righteousnesses, in one sense, yes, are marred by sin. We cannot have salvation through our good works. But God is looking for good works. We must never give the impression to people that sit under us as we preach the gospel that God isn't interested in good works! God is interested in good works. And the judgment will be according to people's works. It matters what people do. God reads the works as he read Cornelius's heart and works.

It is in that sense that I understand these verses in Romans 2:

Who will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption, eternal life. (vv. 6-7)

Example: Cornelius, who was seeking God, seeking to please God; he was seeking, in other words, for eternal life. God granted him eternal life, but not on the ground of the works. But honouring the man's seeking, God saw that he came to salvation through our Lord's forgiveness, apart from his works.

So there is no respect of persons. It matters what people do. God has regard to people's works. The final judgment shall be according to people's works. Do bear in mind exactly what

that passage on the final judgment in the Revelation says. They shall be judged 'according to their works'. But what determines whether anybody shall be sent to the lake of fire, or not? Ah, there it is written that if any man's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he shall be cast into the lake of fire (see 20:15). Whether a person is sent to the lake of fire, or not, depends on whether their name is written in the Book of Life, or not. The works will be judged, each person according to his works. This is the *sentence* and the *penalty*. The penalty will not be the same for all. It shall be 'more tolerable for some' than others.

And let us remember our place in heaven is guaranteed by the fact our names are in the Book of Life by the grace of God. We are saved without works of the law; we are saved by grace through the blood of Christ. Do our works matter? The New Testament insists we shall be judged according to our works. Yes. It is so often said I don't need to repeat it here.

### **The fairness of God's judgments**

Another thing about God's judgments is that they are fair.

For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law: and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law. (2:11-12)

People will be judged by what they have been given to know, on the basis of the evidence available to them. The Jew will be held responsible, so to speak, for what he knows by God's special revelations to Israel at Sinai and subsequently. People who have never heard of that special revelation to Israel will not be judged by it. That is an important principle, isn't it? That doesn't say they won't be judged. They will be judged, but they will be judged by the law that is 'written on their hearts', as verse 14 and following go on to explain. They won't be held responsible for the special revelation of God to Israel if they have never heard of it.

You just imagine the impossibility of the situation: a man stands before the final judgment and the final judge, and the judge passes the sentence of perdition upon him.

And the man says, 'Am I allowed to ask a question?'

'Yes.'

'Why am I being condemned?'

And suppose the voice answered, 'For not believing the Old Testament.'

And the man said, 'I don't know what you mean. What do you mean, "the Old Testament"? I have never heard of nor met the Old Testament.'

And the judge said, 'Don't be silly, man. Of course you haven't. I sent a lot of missionaries out, but they didn't bother to come to you, and so, of course, you've never heard of the Old Testament.'

And the man says, 'And I'm going to be condemned for not believing the Old Testament when I had never even heard of it?'

Well, of course, that will never happen. The judge will judge according to what law they had, according to what evidence they had. So here that doesn't mean that the Gentiles who don't have special revelation have no law at all, for look at verse 14:

For when Gentiles which have no law [that is, no revealed law] do by nature the things of the law, these, having no law, are a law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them. (vv. 14–15)

Now, there are some weighty observations there. When it says they are a law unto themselves, it doesn't mean that they make up the law and are free to make up the law as they go along, instead of abiding by a fixed law. It doesn't mean that; it means that they have no revealed Scripture. They do not have the revelation of God to Israel, but by very nature they do the works of the law. Yes, they do.

#### *Written on our hearts*

Find me a nation, if you will, where people take it as quite all right if one man steals another man's wife. You'll have to do a lot of research and go a long way to find that. Find people that hold it is okay if you steal another man's property without his reasonable consent. Find a people who believe it's okay to lie, and if you should accuse one of them of lying they will say, 'I don't know what you're finding fault with. I always lie. Everybody lies around here. We all do. What are you getting upset about?'

It is a fact of human nature that, despite the fact that you sometimes have lied to others, if I were to lie to you and you discover it, you would come and affront me most indignantly: 'You lied to me!' you'll say.

And if I said to you, 'What are you getting upset about, old boy? Of course I lied to you. What do you suppose? I always lie.'

Well, why do we get upset? Because this is a law written on our hearts, even though we break it constantly.

There are certain things that we know. To sum up a few of them here: we know there is a God. The passage has pointed that out (1:19–21). We know we have a duty of gratitude and respect to him. We know that to blaspheme God is a form of treachery to the Almighty. We know that the killing of innocent people is wrong; it doesn't have to be proved. We know that we should not tell a lie in order to have somebody else condemned, though we know many people do it. We know that stealing another man's wife is wrong. Yes, there are certain things we know. Why? It is because they are written on our hearts.

Now notice exactly the wording of the passage. There is this law 'written on their hearts'. Notice the distinction between the *writing on the heart*, and our '*conscience* also bearing witness'.

People will sometimes tell you, 'I've no conscience against adultery.' Well, that's poor stuff, but that doesn't prove that they don't have the law written on their hearts. The law is not written on the *conscience*. The law is written on the *heart*. Conscience does its job in a twofold way. If we propose doing something that will offend against one of these laws written on the heart, then conscience will raise a warning: 'You'd better not do that; that's wrong.' If my proposal in business means inflicting harm on innocent people or even involves their eventual destruction, then I know the law, and if I propose a scheme that involves the breaking of that law, then conscience will warn me first, and if I do it, conscience will then make me feel guilty.

But it is possible to stifle the voice of conscience. The Bible talks of people whose 'consciences have been seared as with a red-hot iron' (1 Tim 4:2), so that conscience no longer works. That doesn't mean that I have eradicated the law from my heart, for the heart is much deeper than conscience. Conscience is like an alarm clock, you know. You set it to wake you up at half-past six. It goes off at half-past six. Then you bash it hard! You intend to have another half-an-hour at least. If you go on bashing it hard, one of these days it won't work at all. The fact that it now no longer works says nothing about whether your rising up was late or early.

So the law is written on our hearts, and there are certain things that we know because the Creator has written them there. Conscience will work upon that, but even if people go against their conscience and in the end destroy it, that doesn't mean that they don't know the law. The law will still rise up.

Then it speaks of their thoughts, 'accusing and excusing one another'. We would not do either if we had no basic sense of right and wrong. We wouldn't bother to accuse anybody, nor would we excuse anybody, if we didn't have a basic sense of right and wrong.

In the day of wrath, in the day of judgment, God shall 'judge the secrets of men' (v. 16). Not only will judgment be according to works, but God will show men their hearts. It will be as though, if a man objected: 'I didn't know it was wrong', God will play back his thoughts to him. 'This is what you were thinking when you did so-and-so. You knew it was wrong, didn't you?' He shall expose the secret of men's hearts.

### **Evidence against those who have received divine revelation (2:1-16)**

We come now to the third big section. We have had what people used to call the pagans, but they better include the moderns. We have seen the evidence of creation around us, and man's attitude to it. We have seen the evidence of the deep conscience—the heart—the law written on the heart upon which surface conscience works, or is meant to work.

Incidentally, you will notice how innate some of these things are, in the sense of being inbuilt. 'Inbuilt' is a better way to speak of them than 'innate'. When some people are convicted of having done something wrong and are exposed, all of a sudden they blush. I don't know if you find it easy to blush, but one of the prophets cries out aloud about this. Such-and-such people of such-and-such a city were such hardened sinners they couldn't even blush (see Jer 6:15). We don't have much control about our blushing, do we? We can't say, 'Now I will blush,' or, 'No, I won't blush.' Those people who have lighter skin pay a testimony to themselves, even against their will sometimes, by blushing.

### **The revelation of God in history**

Now we come to the Jew in particular. That is, we come to the man with religion as distinct from ethics—the man with religion, strictly so-called. That goes through the rest of chapter 2 and the first part of chapter 3. Here Paul deals in particular with the Jew because he did have a revealed religion, not just the evidence of creation, not just the evidence of the law written on the heart, but now the religion revealed historically to God's people. And, of course, to this very present day the Jew is proud of it and rightly proud of God's revelation within history.

[you] know his will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide of the blind, a light of them that are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having in the law the form of knowledge and of the truth. (vv. 18–20)

They know the truth. We should be grateful for it, put great emphasis on it and not be afraid to say they are witnesses of God's self-revelation in history and to talk about the choice of that nation. That is an important part of the gospel. Let's just flip back to the beginning of chapter 1 and see what Paul has to say about its relevance to our gospel.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he promised before by his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh. (vv. 1–3)

### *The gospel is historically based*

The Christian gospel is based on the Old Testament Scriptures. You cannot impugn the authority and inspiration of the Old Testament without impugning the Christian gospel, for the gospel was built on the Old Testament. Historically, Jesus Christ is of the seed of David, according to the flesh. The gospel was promised by God in the Old Testament. God laid down the pattern and even dictated that Messiah would be born of the seed of David. This all has been fulfilled in Christ. It is an important part of the evidence for the gospel and is to be used, surely, even in talking to would-be atheists.

In this sense, Christianity (the Christian gospel) is not a philosophy. What I mean by that is this. Anybody (well, you'll have to have quite a big wallop of intelligence in your head) but anybody, if he has the mind and the ability to, can produce a philosophical system. And such systems are to be evaluated according to their inner worth. But nobody can arrange to be born of the seed of David. I think not. Did you arrange to be born of your parents? We won't investigate the great mysteries of your origin. (Don't investigate mine, you might find some rather doubtful characters in there.) You cannot arrange to be born of the seed of David. But Christ was born of the seed of David, which means more than simple physical descent. It bids us think what David stood for and who David was and by whose appointment he became king and all the prophecies concerning him, and so forth. And there is much more beside, in the Old Testament, with its promises and prophecies of the coming Messiah. The question is: Does Jesus match up to those promises and prophecies and foreshadowings and suchlike things?

Having said that, Christianity is not a philosophy strictly so-called. The Christian gospel is the final product of a great movement of God's self-revelation in history. That is why the historical side of our faith is exceedingly important, and why two of the Gospels, and Luke's in particular, begin with specifying the exact time *in history* that the Lord was born and then began his ministry and then died. This is an historical thing. Philosophy is, of course, independent of history; not so the Christian gospel.



*A question of consistency (2:17–24)*

We come back to these Jews. They had God's self-revelation, and they were disposed to teach it. The danger is that, by teaching it, you think you've done enough. We teach the glorious proposition that we are to love our neighbours as ourselves, based on Leviticus, of course, and think we've done all that we are required to do in that connection by teaching others that they ought to love their neighbours as one's self. We can forget that just teaching it is not enough to put us in the clear. If, having taught that we should love our neighbours as ourselves, we don't love our neighbours ourselves, we have added to our condemnation! Listen to James: 'Don't be many of you teachers, brethren, knowing that we shall receive the stricter condemnation' (3:1).

That is the point of Romans 2:21 and following.

you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law dishonour God by breaking the law. For, as it is written, 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.' (vv. 21–24 ESV)

That is a grievous stumbling block, isn't it? Christians are among those guilty of putting it in people's way. When Christians preach the Bible and preach salvation, and then in professional and business life cut corners, the gospel and the word of God gets a bad reputation.

A friend of mine told me he came across a Christian businessman in town, seated in his car with his wife. He knew of a certain statement the man had made, which was an outright lie, and he had occasion to face the man with it. He pointed out to this professed Christian that what he had said was a lie. And his reply was, 'Ah, but that was a business lie.' Oh. So there are two laws, are there? One for the ordinary populace and one for businessmen, and business lies are okay? God judges according to works. It is not enough to teach: if we don't do what we teach, the judgment, of course, is more severe.

*A question of circumcision (2:25–29)*

Then there is a matter of ritual and symbolism. In verse 25 onward it is the question of circumcision.

For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. (vv. 25–29 ESV)

Years and years ago, when I lived in County Durham, there was a dear Christian lady who was very much concerned about the young men that were students in the Jewish Rabbinical College in that part of the world. She had befriended one of these students, and eventually it

was arranged that I should meet him. When we met, he said to me, 'Oh, I'm sorry the Rabbi didn't come, but it's a good thing he didn't, because he would have spit at you.'

'Oh,' I said, 'that's unusual.'

So we got to discussing salvation.

'It's no good talking to me about salvation,' he said. 'We Jews are, by definition, saved. "Who is like unto thee, O Israel, saved of the Lord?"<sup>5</sup> We are saved. I know a lot of us are a lot of rotters, but that makes no difference. We are saved!'

Really? 'Circumcised the eighth day . . .' and all the rest of it, as Paul says in Philippians 3. They have the outward symbolism right and the religious practice right, but what value is the symbolism if it is not matched by practice?

Paul points out that sometimes the uncircumcised Gentile lives a much more morally respectable life than the Jewish man, even though the Gentile is not circumcised and the Jew is. Circumcision is of value, he says, because of its symbolism and what it stands for, but if it is just an empty symbol it is useless. That leads him on to consider whether there is any advantage in being a Jew.

#### *The advantages of the Jewish people (3:1-8)*

There is, of course, an advantage in being a Jew. As a nation, they have a special place in the historical revelation of God. That doesn't mean that their sins don't matter. It is useless for the Jew to protest, 'Yes, well, we know we are sinners, and in the Old Testament God says we are sinners, but that merely shows that God knew what he was talking about. When he said we were sinners he was right; and so we are sinners and he has no reason to condemn me, because my very sin has fulfilled what his word says: we are all sinners. Why does God condemn me for doing what he said I would do? Doesn't that prove Scripture true?' (see vv. 4-8).

So I may sin, may I, because God says we are all sinners, and if I sin that proves God true? So God has no right to condemn me when my behaviour proves him true? Well, you can see through that fallacious argument without my explaining it.

#### *The conclusion: all of us are sinful (3:9-20)*

So Paul comes to his final conclusion on this matter. We are, all of us, sinful. And the climax of it is in verse 19:

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (vv. 19-20 ESV)

### **Conclusion: all are guilty and need to repent**

So we have dealt with the question of God's judgment and the principles on which it works. I repeat; it is important here to follow what Paul is saying and his technique. He doesn't explode with fiery pictures of hell, does he? Now, our Lord preached hell. It was he who talked about 'the worm dying not and the fire not being quenched' (see Mark 9:48). And he

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<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 33:29.

preached hell largely to the Pharisees, not to the publicans and sinners. You will notice that, too. In our modern world, we need to convict men of sin, not necessarily by standing and preaching hellfire, but by doing what Paul is doing here in these three major divisions of life, and bringing all to the conclusion that he now reaches: that all have sinned in the past, and do come short of the glory of God now (v. 23). So true repentance, basic repentance, is thus agreeing with God that we stand before his judgment bar as guilty sinners deserving the penalty, and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves.

I make one more general proposition. It is only a general proposition, and of course it is not true in every individual case. But in my experience over some years, the reason why many people have no assurance of salvation is because they have never understood what basic repentance means. They have never faced God's law.

For instance, let me use an analogy. Here comes a man to a surgeon. He's got trouble with his lungs—cancer of the lungs, indeed. It has been produced by smoking. And the medic has a look at him and says, 'I'm sorry. The cancer is very far developed. The only hope for you, my man, is for you to come and let me give you a heart and lung transplant.'

'No, no, Doctor,' he says. 'No. I'm not as bad as all that. I have now decided to give up smoking, and I'm never going to smoke for the rest of my life!'

Well, jolly good stuff, he realizes smoking is wrong and bad, so he's now going to give it up. But, 'I'm sorry,' says the doctor. 'Even if you never take another cigarette for the rest of your life, your case is already hopeless. There is nothing you can do about it, actually. Either you let me perform this operation on you, or else you're as good as dead, old boy.'

We must take this seriously. All talk of 'We'll do our best from now on,' will deceive us if we don't first face this: that when we've done our best we stand before the judgment bar of God, not only as sinners but guilty sinners, worthy of the penalty of his law, worthy of his wrath; and there is nothing we can do to gain or earn salvation.

That is basic repentance. If I am prepared to take that stand sincerely before God, oh, God has at once a mighty salvation! But it is on those terms of first repentance towards God, and then faith in the Lord Jesus. The rest of the first section of Romans is given over to salvation in that context.

## Questions and Answers Session One

### *Romans Overview and Section One*

My task now is to attempt some answers to your questions. I will read out the question, then give an answer. I am prepared, within reason, to take supplementary questions to the answers given; but how many supplementary questions will depend on what time is available.

### **Question one**

*Could you give some more information on the heart and the conscience and what 'written on their hearts' refers to?*

DWG: The question stems, of course, from Romans 2:14. It is a good idea to start by looking at the verse again.

For when Gentiles which have no law do by nature the things of the law, these, having no law, are a law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts . . . (vv. 14–15)

### **The universals**

So, let's look at each of the details. The Gentiles, says verse 14, 'have no law', meaning that they do not have the revealed law as given to the Israelites, popularly known as the Ten Commandments plus all the elaborations on the Ten Commandments. The Gentiles have no *revealed* law in that special sense, in the sense of special revelation. The interesting fact is that, some Gentiles at least, though they have no revealed law, 'do by nature the things of the law'. And that is an observable fact. The law says 'You shall not murder'. Nations that have never heard of Israel nor of Mount Sinai nor of the Ten Commandments do hold that murder is wrong. The ancient Greeks did; the Romans did; there is scarcely a nation on earth that doesn't. They 'do by nature the things of the law'. That is, they observe the law, even though they often break it; they observe by nature the things that are written in what we call the law of Moses—God's revelation.

So, that is number one. What is it talking about? They have no revealed Ten Commandments, so to speak (no law of Moses and all that is involved in it), but 'by nature' they do things that are written in that law. They hold that murder is wrong. They hold that stealing somebody else's wife is wrong. They hold that telling lies in the law court in order to get your opponent condemned unjustly is wrong; the Greeks didn't have the law of Moses, but they held to that principle in their legal system. And the Romans didn't have the law of

Moses, but they had some very strict laws on this matter. And there are other examples we could think of. The Gentiles 'by nature' do at least some of the things that are written in the law of Moses, that is, in the revealed law given to Israel by God.

How would you account for the fact that they by nature do the things that are written in the revealed law? Paul's answer is that they 'show the work of the law *written in their hearts*.' That is, God has put it in their hearts. It is not only the basic sense of right and wrong—the sense that we are aware that some things are right and some things are wrong—but they have a knowledge that certain *particular* things are right and certain *particular* things are wrong. And it is universal—put there by the Creator.

Now, this is a very important question, and I'm glad somebody asked it, because you will find many who will say: 'This is only the viewpoint of a limited society. If this were true, there would be evidence of it worldwide.' And the answer is: there is evidence of it worldwide. If you have not read the famous Irishman, C. S. Lewis, on the question then spend a couple of pounds and start to read him on it. He has investigated the ideas on these matters from different parts of history among different peoples and demonstrated how these certain basic principles are indeed universal.<sup>6</sup>

If you meet people that want to say that the things written on the heart are not universal, you will sometimes hear arguments of this particular sort. King Darius, I think it was, centuries ago made a little experiment about the question: 'Are things universal or not?' So, he called some people from India and said, 'What money must I give you to make you burn the bodies of your parents when they die?'

And they said, 'We wouldn't do it for love nor money! To burn them would be a horrible thing to do! No, we eat the bodies of our dead parents.'

So, then he called some Greeks and said, 'What money must I give you to eat the bodies of your parents when they die?'

They said, 'We would never do it for love nor money. We burn our dead!'

And so, King Darius, with his limited intelligence and logic, decided that these things are not universal; it depends on what society you're brought up in. It escaped him completely that both these peoples were expressing one fundamental thing: you must honour your parents. One lot did it by eating them when they died; the other lot did it by burning them when they died, but they were all intent on one and the same thing: their duty to honour their dead parents. If one group had said 'Burn our dead relatives? Of course not! Once they're dead, we throw them on the scrap heap!' Well, that would have been a different attitude, wouldn't it? It would have been not honouring the dead. But both were honouring, only they did it in different ways.

That kind of thing should not confuse us. There is a general law that you shall not do your neighbour any harm if you can avoid it. That is a general law and known to everybody. Now, in most countries it is not optional which side of the road you drive on. Of course, in *some* countries it would appear that it is optional which side of the road you drive your car on, and you can do it one way or the other way, just as you please! But if that were allowed in a city like Belfast, of course there would be innumerable car accidents, and people would get killed.

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<sup>6</sup> See, in particular, his book *The Abolition of Man*.

The general law 'you shall not do your neighbour any harm if you can avoid it' has to be translated into regulations. And so, in Belfast the regulation is that you drive on the left. In America (well, they can't help it) the regulation is that you drive on the right. It would be stupid to say, 'Well, there you are, you see. The thing is not universal. You can drive in the left in one country, and on the right in another. That shows that all these things are merely determined by your society.'

But that is to miss the point. The regulations are determined this way or that way. The *basic rule* that they are putting into effect is 'you shall not do your neighbour any harm if you can avoid it'. That is universal. And this is a thing that we need to be able to argue with our modern friends who have been trained, right from the start, that what is right and wrong depends on your society. It is not so; these things are universal.

There is a quotation, if you've never come across it, from ancient Egyptian custom (remind me, and I shall try to bring it along to show you it in detail). It comes, I think, from 'The Book of the Dead'. So, when they laid out a corpse and mummified it, some of the Egyptians at least were in the habit of adding a little book, a statement on the corpse, in which the corpse declared his good deeds. It was because they thought the deceased was going to the final judgment. And this book would declare his claim that the final judgment should show him mercy. It has nothing to do with the Old Testament or the law of Moses or anything of the sort. This is their pagan custom, but they did believe in the final judgment.

And so, a man, has it, as if he were writing in his own name: 'I have not done anybody any wrong. I have not lied. I have not committed adultery. I have not cheated on the grain measure. I have not . . .', and there is a whole list. Many of the items are expressing the same sentiments as you will find in the law of Moses.

These things, written on our hearts by the Creator, are universal. It's no good people complaining that this is intolerant, and 'this is your prejudice and pride'. The laws of arithmetic are universal. And if you want to be detailed in your argument, then show yourself aware that we follow a decimal system, whereas the ancient Babylonians followed a sexagesimal system. We go in tens; they went in sixties. We follow them partly, don't we? A circle has how many? Yes, three hundred and sixty degrees, thanks to the Babylonians, of course. That's a sexagesimal system. The fact is that the Babylonians had a sexagesimal system in arithmetic, and we had another system, until the modern Europeans compelled us 'superior English' to go over to decimalisation. We had twelve pence to the shilling and twenty shillings to the pound, and all those lovely things. (Never mind about that! I wander.) The fact is that now we have a different system: a decimal system. The ancient Babylonians had a sexagesimal system. But that proves nothing about the basic laws of arithmetic: they are common and universal.

## Conscience

Perhaps I have answered what you are talking about when you talk about laws 'written on the heart'. The other part of the question is, 'What has conscience to do with this?'

Well, 'the heart' stands for the deepest part of men, and there these laws are written. They are not said to be 'written on his conscience'. *Conscience* is that internal mechanism that God

has put within us. We didn't invent it. Nobody invented it. It was put there by God the creator as part of the human makeup.

Conscience is the instrumentation that watches what we do with these basic laws. If we propose to do something that is contrary to those laws, whether we like it or not we find we have a mechanism within us that witnesses to this: 'Hey, that's not right!' Conscience will tell us that. And conscience will forewarn us that, 'If you do it, you will get yourself into trouble.' And if we persist in doing it, conscience will make us feel guilty. What for? For having gone against one of those basic laws written on our hearts. So, there is a difference between the law written on the heart and the conscience.

You might ask why we should bother to make that distinction. It is because people will face you and say, 'Adultery? I have no conscience about adultery.'

Well, alas, that's true; they don't have any conscience because they've obliterated the conscience so many times that it doesn't work anymore. It doesn't mean that down below, deep in their hearts, the law isn't written. It's just that they have so brutalized the conscience that it doesn't work. But the law is still written on the heart.

Related to this suppressing what the conscience says, I was recommending a book in the lunch break that is useful for its records of case studies of women who have had abortions and knew it to be wrong when they were having them, and the effect it has on them subsequently—on the way they talk and what they do. It accounts for the fact that many of the medical staff, at least in America, who have assisted in abortions, go on drugs or resign because they can't stick it anymore.

We make a distinction then between conscience: the mechanism that warns us if we are going to do something that is against the basic law, or gives us a sense of guilt when we have done things against the basic law (a conscience that can be sat upon so much that it ceases to work) and the basic law written on the heart.

## Question two

*If we say that a person living in the jungle who has never heard the gospel is going to be judged by their works according to the law written on the hearts, is this not contrary to John 14:6? That is to say, is this giving another means of salvation?*

DWG: I'm very grateful to the question here and for the opportunity it gives me to say something, perhaps more distinct than I said before. I am not saying that anybody is saved by their works. People who live in Belfast are not saved by their works. People who live in the jungle are not saved by their works. That is the universal law. We are saved, if we are saved at all, by faith, not by works. That is salvation. What I was talking about is *judgment* by works. So, let us think together.

The one thing you shouldn't do (and you won't anyway, but I'll remind you) is to take me as though I were the Pope. I'm not saying these things *ex cathedra*. (I know I'm sitting up here in a special chair, but that doesn't make my statements any more true!) You should question everything I say, but please, question it by Scripture.

### **Not saved by works**

Look again at those Scriptures that say that people are judged 'by their works'. That is what Scripture says. We have read it here in Romans 2. I deliberately read the account of the final judgment (Rev 20). We are judged by our works—not saved by our works—judged by our works.

So, is that clear? Is anybody in any further doubt about that? There is a difference between judgment and *salvation*, isn't there? Judged by your works, you are sinners. You won't dispute it, I think. You are not saved by your works; but you are judged by your works, and you must accept God's judgment on them and of your sinnership and how you can't save yourself. And your only salvation is through the salvation that God has provided, which he gives you free and for nothing. But you are *judged* by your works. I read you the account of the final judgment. They are judged 'according to their works'. I made the point that whether anybody is sent to the lake of fire or not is for a particular reason. It doesn't say that certain people's works, having been judged, were found to be so bad that, of course, they had to be sent to the lake of fire; whereas some people's works that were found to be just a little bit bad (but not all *that* bad) were allowed into heaven. It doesn't say that. It's very clear that they are judged according to their works, but what determines whether someone is sent to the lake of fire or not? It is whether that person's name is written in the Book of Life or not. It is very clear and very precise (see vv. 11–15).

So, have I there made myself quite clear?

### **No other name**

Now, I want to answer the second half of this question: 'Is this not contrary to John 14:6?' So, let's look at what John 14:6 says. Here is our Lord speaking:

Jesus said unto him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one comes unto the Father, but by me.'

And just to show I sincerely believe it, I can add to that the words the apostle spoke before the Sanhedrin. Shall we look at them? This is Acts 4, and Peter is talking to the Sanhedrin:

be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him does this man stand here before you whole. He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner. And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, [whereby] we must be saved. (vv. 10–12)

This agrees of course with John 14:6. 'No one comes unto the Father,' says our Lord Jesus, 'but by me.' There is 'no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.' It is the name of him whom the Jewish rulers crucified: Jesus.

#### *Those who have never heard*

That raises what I think this question has at its heart: 'What about those who have never heard of Jesus?' Is it impossible that they should be saved because they have never heard of Jesus,



since no one comes to the Father except by him, nor is there 'any other name under heaven whereby we must be saved'?

Now, I am going to give you the answer that I myself believe because, at the moment at least, I am persuaded of it unless you can persuade me of it differently. I say it with bated breath because I am aware of great men of God who would deny what I am about to say. Therefore you must ponder it, and you mustn't accept what I say simply because I say it (as you won't, of course). You must ponder it seriously and come to make up your own mind on it.

There is no name under heaven, other than that of Jesus, by which we must be saved. No one comes to the Father but by him. I want you first to answer these questions to yourself:

Who is Jesus?

Did the one we call Jesus just begin to exist at Bethlehem? Is that what you hold?

Who is this Jesus that died for you at Calvary?

Would you think he began at Bethlehem or would you hold with the Gospel by John that he is 'the word made flesh' (1:14)?

You would believe that? I'm glad you do. You would be a heretic if you didn't!

In the beginning was the Word [eternally existent], and the Word was with God and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

It is not that he was God in those days and then ceased to be. He was God. He is God. He was God therefore. And that Word was made flesh without ceasing to be the Word of God. The Bible does not say that 'God died for us' on the cross. But the Bible gives us to understand very clearly that the one who died was God incarnate. And if he wasn't, you and I are not saved of course. It would be impossible for a mere man to bear that load of sin and take away the sin of the world.

'There is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved . . .' The name here is 'Jesus'. I am simply asking you who Jesus was and is.

#### *Case law in Romans*

Now, let's look at what Romans is going to tell us emphatically as it holds in front of us the case law on these matters of how we are justified. It is the legal precedent that establishes for all time on what grounds anybody can be justified.

For what says the Scripture? 'And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness.' (4:3)

Pray notice exactly what it says. It doesn't say, 'Abraham believed God, and the righteousness of Christ was imputed to him.' It doesn't say that, does it? It says, 'Abraham believed God, and *it* was counted to him for righteousness'. I stress it because some theologians deny it, and they want to read the verse: 'Abraham believed God, and the righteousness of Christ was imputed to him.' That is not what it says. 'Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.'

Now, I am going to ask you: was Abraham saved? Was he already justified from that point on? What do you hold? Tell me honestly out of the depths of your heart and conscience. Was Abraham justified at that stage and saved and accepted by God and made ready for heaven? By raising a hand, vote: yes. Now, by raising a hand, vote: no.

AUDIENCE: The ayes have it.

DWG: The ayes have it then, yes. Why doesn't it say, 'And Abraham believed Jesus?'

AUDIENCE: There was no 'Jesus' at the time.

DWG: Yes. But are you saying, my dear brother, that a man could be saved without believing in Jesus? Or what are you saying? Do you see my point?

Let me put it the other way round. Is it enough for a man to believe God and for it to be counted to him for righteousness? Or has that all gone out of fashion, and it is not enough nowadays? Can I hear the grey matter churning around in your heads? I put the question to you.

Now, two further questions to get you thinking. This God that Abraham believed in, was he already a Trinity, or wasn't he? What do you believe about that? Did God become a Trinity when Jesus was born, or were there always three persons in the godhead? Always, you say? Are you telling me that when Abraham believed, the God he believed in was a Trinity?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

DWG: Second question: did he know that God was a Trinity?

You don't seem too ready with your reply. Well, let's leave it doubtful, therefore. But Abraham is cited to us by this serious apostle of Christ as the 'case law' that settles for all time on what grounds a man is justified.

Of course, another thing has to be said. It must be said that Jesus who was born of a virgin was the Word incarnate. Anybody who nowadays, having met Jesus (so to speak), who has read of Jesus and knows about him and who would say to you, 'I believe in God, but I don't believe in Jesus', that person doesn't believe in God, actually.

Saul of Tarsus was like that. He would have told you he believed in God, but when God incarnate appeared on earth, Saul of Tarsus did everything he could to obliterate his name from off the face of the earth. And when the voice called to him out of heaven amidst the glory, he instinctively realized what this glory meant. This was the *shekinah* glory of God. And he said, 'Who are you Lord?' *Kýrios* is the Greek translation of Jehovah. 'Who art thou Lord?' He came to see that Jesus is the Son of God, and that if you reject Jesus, you reject God. That still is to be applied.

But we have to consider those who had never heard of Jesus because Jesus had not yet come. Does that mean that people like Abraham and Hannah and others in the Old Testament who didn't know that he would be called 'Jesus' (because that wasn't told us until Mary and Joseph were told) are saved by their works rather than by the work of Christ? Of course not! And I'm going to point now to Romans 3:

the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood, to show his [that is, God's] righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime,

('Aforetime' is in contrast to this present day, as verse 26 says.)

in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present [time]: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that has faith in Jesus. (vv. 24–26)

Notice the two periods. The 'sins done aforetime' does not refer to the sins we did before we got converted. Paul is talking about the sins done in the centuries before Christ came, even the sins done by those who believed in God and tried to serve God. And God did not execute his wrath but forbore in his mercy. How was God righteous to forbear? Well, because of this 'propitiation'. The work of Christ was at that time still future. Its value, of course, is eternal and covers those who sinned and repented and believed in God in those centuries before Christ came.

But now I had better test as to whether my theology here is right. So, let me ask you. Was Noah forgiven? Do you hold that he was forgiven? Yes, some of you do. And you are expecting to meet him in heaven? Well, if you do, then you must hold that the man was forgiven. On what ground was Noah forgiven?

AUDIENCE: He believed God.

DWG: He believed God. Yes, but there's no forgiveness without sacrifice, is there? On what ground was he forgiven? Anybody got any clues? Well, if you don't know, ask him when you get to heaven. That would be an interesting topic of conversation.

Noah offered a lot of animal sacrifices. Was he forgiven on the basis of those animals? You either think he was or he wasn't. What do you think? If you don't think he was forgiven on the basis of those animals, then why not?

AUDIENCE: It was on the future sacrifice that those sacrifices represent.

DWG: Yes! The blood of bulls and goats can't take away sin (see Heb 10:4). They were but shadows of the coming thing. So, people were forgiven in those days on the basis of the sacrifice of Christ that as far as history was concerned was yet to be, yes? And because of that sacrifice, already in the mind of God, God could have forbearance with those folks. Am I reading it right or not?

One man over here thinks I am. Well, that's one encouragement to me. Do go away and think about it anyway. I warn you that dear believers divide over this matter, and some people will say that what I am saying is not only wrong but shocking. They say, 'Well if that is true, then we don't need to go and preach the gospel to the heathen.'

That strikes me as an extraordinary statement. Would you have bothered to tell the Jews like Martha and Mary about the sacrifice of Jesus, or not? I myself would go to the ends of the earth, if God called me to do it, to tell folks who have never heard of Jesus, about him. There is such inestimable wealth in Jesus! Well, of course so. And I am not suggesting that all the heathen that have never heard of Jesus are queuing up to be saved either. They need to be

brought to repentance, hence the passages we studied this morning (Rom 1–3). They do seriously need to be brought to repentance. All I am saying is that when people repented and believed God in those far off days before the coming of Christ, like Abraham, they were justified. How, and on what grounds? Through the propitiation that one day Christ would effect.

So his death accounts for and covers the sins done 'aforetime'. But notice the exact language of verse 26:

For the showing, I say, of his righteousness *at this present season*: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that has faith in . . .

Now notice the term: 'Jesus' of course! How can anybody have faith in Jesus when they didn't even know his name? Mary herself didn't know his name was to be Jesus until she was told by the angel (Luke 1:31). But now Jesus is the name, of course it's the name! And in that name we go and preach to the heathen as well; of course we do. And if anyone won't have Jesus, by definition, he is rejecting God, because of who Jesus is. You believe that Jesus is God incarnate, don't you? Of course you do.

I have said enough on that topic to provoke you at any rate. Do think about it. Ponder it long and large. Be careful how you talk to other folks about it too. And if they say that Gooding is a heretic say, 'Yes, well we have our suspicions . . . but on the other hand he is a moderately decent chap and seems to believe in the deity of Christ!' Be kind and gentle to people. Don't destroy their evangelical zeal; but do think through the problem. It is an important matter when it comes to the justice of God's judgments.

### Question three

*You said that in Romans, creation doesn't portray the Godhead, but in Romans 1:20 it does. Is this a translation issue?*

DWG: So, let's read it:

For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and . . .

Well, here I must ask you to tell me what your translation is. Does your translation at that point say, 'and Godhead'?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

DWG: It does? May I ask what translation you have?

AUDIENCE: The old King James Version.

DWG: The old King James? And they talk about his 'Godhead'? Now we have to think very clearly in our minds about the exact terminology.

In English, we have two words: *Godhood* and *Godhead*. *Godhood* speaks of the essence of God—his being: that he is God and not man; he is God and not an angel; he is the uncreated God. That is his *Godhood*: the nature of God in his being.

In modern English, *Godhead* is our reflection, in the light of Scripture, on 'the persons of the Godhead', as we say. The Godhead is: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is God, equally God. Here there are three distinct persons, not three distinct people but three distinct persons. That is normally what we nowadays mean by Godhead.

What Romans is saying by its Greek word *theiotes* is that as you look at creation you see the Godhood. You see that God is God. He is Creator. He is the everlasting God. He had no beginning nor will he have an end. He is God and not man. He is not an angel. He is the uncreated. That is the nature of God—his Godhood. And that certainly is what the Greek word means that underlies the translation here.

Godhead—the fact that God is a Trinity—is something that many people never knew and only came to know clearly by the incarnation of our Lord and his claim to be equal with the Father and his resurrection. We have come to know that God is, in fact, a Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I am not sure that the Bible means that just by looking at creation you could deduce that God is a Trinity. I don't know how it would be done. You deduce that there is a God, scarcely that there is a Trinity. The 'Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him' (John 1:18). He has 'told him out'.

Now, we know that God is a Trinity, but the pagan, so to speak, is not told that creation reveals to him that there is a Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It reveals to him that there is God, and now we know he is a Trinity.

My questioner asked me, 'Is this a translation issue?' My answer is: yes, it is a translation issue. There are two words in Greek: *theiotes* and *theotes*. They are different. *Theiotes* means the nature of God—Godhood. *Theotes* means divinity: one of the three persons of the Godhead.

### Question four

*Is homosexuality in any way natural and genetic or is it just people suppressing the truth?*

DWG: I am not a medical man nor a scientist. I have heard it said that there is a gene for homosexuality. I know of other scientists—medics who are interested in the cell and genetics—who say there is no one gene for homosexuality. It could be that tendencies towards homosexuality are brought about in some people by unfortunate experiences in childhood. And it could be that where a true relationship between father and son and mother and son have been impaired (as often nowadays is horribly so) it can induce a tendency towards homosexuality. From that point of view, those that suffer those things should have our sympathy or at least our compassion.

That doesn't justify the practice of homosexuality. Some people, by traumatic upbringing, are given to violence. That doesn't justify the practice of violence. Some people, by whatever cause, are given to short tempers and explosions of temper. That doesn't justify it. All of us have various wrong inclinations that are part of the wreckage of Adam's sin. That doesn't excuse us from the practice of those wrong deeds that spring from those wrong inclinations.

And if you want the evidence of law 'written in our hearts' and you come back to the law written on our hearts, you will observe how this is also linked with the fact of a creator. If there is no creator then, in the end, our bodies are accidents of evolution. If there is a creator

who made our bodies then, of course, the very design of them carries a witness to his purpose. And of all the things about human bodies, the mechanism of sex declares the purpose of sex. Some things are 'against nature', as Paul puts it in Romans 1:

God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use . . . (v. 26)

Homosexuality goes against nature itself and against the evidence of the purpose of the mechanisms of the human body.

### Question five

*How do you approach someone who trusts in good works to get to heaven?*

*How should we encourage good works in our preaching?*

DWG: Well, if somebody is trusting good works to get to heaven, I should take them straight to the passages such as we've read and shall read in Romans 3, 4 and 5; and Titus 3; and Ephesians 2. I would point out the constant witness of the New Testament that there is a salvation that does not depend on works; it is a gift. And then I would point to the underlying things, to why it has to be a gift and not works. It is because God's final evaluation of our works is that we have sinned in the past and do still come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23).

That is God's estimation of our works. And that is where you often find it difficult with people who trust in good works to get to heaven. They are not prepared for that radical repentance that we met in Romans 3. They will agree that they have done some things wrong, like lying or stealing or something or other; but that their sins are such that they stand with their mouth shut before God under the penalty of the law and cannot save themselves, that they are not prepared to admit. And if they are not prepared to admit that, there is no salvation anyway. For the terms of salvation are: 'repentance towards God', that is, accepting God's verdict, and 'faith in the Lord Jesus' (see Acts 20:21). That is very important.

### Question six

*How should we encourage good works in our preaching?*

DWG: It depends who you are talking to. If you are talking to believers, well the Epistles abound with the exhortation that we are to do good works! And our works will be judged, for Christians are judged by their works, Scripture says. If at the judgment seat of Christ, 'the fire of Christ's judgment' (notice the metaphor: the *fire* of his judgment) 'shall test everybody's work, of what sort it is' (see 1 Cor 3:13). It isn't quite the Sunday school prize giving, you know. The fire shall test each man's work to see of what quality it is. If it survives the fire of Christ's criticism, we shall have a reward and the work will abide, of course. It will be something to show for all eternity and a reward on top (v. 14). If the fire of his criticism and judgment consumes our work and it is burned up, we shall suffer loss. We shall have nothing to show for it.

But then Scripture adds an important point. The man, if any, to whom this happens shall himself be saved. How can that be if all his works are burned up? Well, because salvation never did depend on works anyway. 'He himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire' (see v. 15).

If you want a vivid story to etch it on your minds, you could think of Lot. He was a righteous man. God saved him out of Sodom, yet so as by fire. His life's work was virtually burnt up. Second Peter 2 will tell you he was a saved man: he was a 'just man' (v. 7). But his works? That was rather serious.

So, for believers, yes, there is the plain straightforward encouragement to do good works. Yes, but the last section of Romans will point us to our motivation: 'I beseech you by the mercies of God . . .' (see 12:1). Christ died for us that he might be Lord (see 14:9).

How would you encourage the unconverted? What I meant in my earlier talk was that we must be careful in preaching the gospel and telling people our good works are like filthy rags lest we give the impression that God is against good works on the part of unbelievers. We cannot be *saved* by works; our works come short, but that doesn't mean that the unbeliever can say, 'Well, as long as I'm an unbeliever I can live as I like because my works don't count!' That is not true. And you see the case of Cornelius. To have told Cornelius: 'Your works are as filthy rags, so don't talk to me about your works,' would be nonsense. The angel had told him his good works had come up before God as a memorial. But he wasn't saved by his works. And the solemn Scriptures tell us that the unregenerate will be judged by their works, and it will be more tolerable for some than for others, so let me say again that we must not give the impression to the unconverted that it doesn't matter whether they do good works or bad, and that God is against good works. Of course, he's not. And sometimes unbelievers can be more full of good works than we believers, isn't that so? What of course has to be made clear is that they cannot by their good works earn salvation.

## Definitions and Arguments in Section One

### *We Shall be Saved From the Wrath of God—Part 1*

#### Our studies so far

We have observed that there are four major parts to this epistle. First of all, 1–5:11; secondly, 5:12–8:39; thirdly, 9:1–11:36; and, finally, 12:1 to the end of the book.

1. 1:1–5:11	2. 5:12–8:39	3. 9:1–11:36	4. 12:1–16:27
WRATH OF GOD	WRECKAGE OF ADAM'S SIN	FAILURE OF ISRAEL'S FAITH AND SERVICE	APPEAL FOR OUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE
Righteousness apart from the law	Righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in us	Christ is the end of the law for righteousness	Love is the fulfilment of the law
Christ died for us	We died with Christ	Jew/Gentile relations	Jew/Gentile relations
WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD	SAVED IN HOPE	ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED	NOW IS OUR SALVATION NEARER
Hope of the glory of God	Them he also glorified . . . creation delivered	'Life from the dead'	'The day is at hand', 'Satan bruised'
THE LOVE OF GOD (5:5–11)	THE LOVE OF GOD (8:35–39)	THE WISDOM OF GOD (11:33–36)	THE ONLY WISE GOD (16:27)

Let me remind you how we came across that division. This is not some arbitrary division imposed on Paul's own writing. It comes to light as you consider the thought-flow, the order of his argument, what his main themes are and how he develops them. So we noticed at the beginning he tells us that 'the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes' (1:16). He then proceeds to give us the reasons why we need to be saved and therefore what salvation implies.



*The wrath of God (1:1–5:11)*

We noticed that in the first part he is concerned with the wrath of God against sinners, and that we are not only sinners but guilty sinners. That is, we have not only come short of God's glory, but we are guilty, and we stand guilty before the judgment throne of God on account of our sin, and there we are to be found without excuse. So, chapter 1 talks about the wrath of God and so does chapter 2. Throughout this whole section, the wrath of God is mentioned time and again and comes to its climax, as you see, towards the end of the first half of chapter 5, with the glorious statement of salvation, 'We shall be saved from the wrath of God through him' (v. 9). It forms the climax of that particular theme, that flow of thought: we need to be saved because of the wrath of God against our sin — we shall be saved.

Notice that future tense. It is not 'have been saved' but '*shall be* saved from the wrath of God through him'. And at that climax we have this tremendous statement of the love of God that has secured the fact that we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him.

*The wreckage of Adam's sin (5:12–8:39)*

With the beginning of the second half of chapter 5 we get the second major reason why we need to be saved; that is, the wreckage caused by Adam's sin and the devastation, the slaveries, the dominions under which we have fallen as a result of Adam's disobedience and sin. That topic of the wreckage of Adam's sin now goes through to the end of this second part, where we find the statements of the wonderful redemption from this wreckage. Creation herself was subjected to vanity. Creation herself, therefore, shall be delivered from bondage to corruption. Creation was subjected to vanity because of Adam's sin but, through the redemption in Christ, creation herself shall be delivered from her bondage to corruption (8:19–22).

Secondly, even we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, that is, the redemption of our bodies (v. 23). The wreckage of our human bodies caused by Adam's disobedience and the fall shall eventually be put right. As to ourselves, our bodies themselves shall be redeemed; and then as to ourselves who will inhabit those bodies, we are told at the end of Romans 8 that we are to be conformed to the image of God's Son (v. 29). And with the tremendous statement of the redemption that saves us from the wreckage of Adam's sin and brings us to glory, we have another great statement of the love of God (vv. 31–39).

It is not a question, therefore, of imposing arbitrary analyses on the gospel, it is a question of following through its major themes and tracing them through, each to its own particular climax.

*The failure of Israel's faith and service (9:1–11:36)*

That chapters 9–11 form a particular part is again pretty evident, because chapter 9 begins now with the question of the failure of Israel. For though they were the chosen people of God, the nation through whom the Messiah would be born, the nation to whom the Old Testament prophecies were committed as a trust, the nation that stood out amongst all other nations in the quality and form of its worship of God and its service of God, they were the nation nonetheless that, when the Messiah came, rejected him and crucified him. That, of course, constitutes a great problem. If you are going to preach the gospel of God like Paul did and tell

your audience that the gospel of God is founded on what was promised in the Old Testament through the prophets, as he does in Romans 1, and then you have to admit that the nation to whom those prophecies came rejected Jesus as Messiah, well, now you have a certain problem that you will have to start explaining.

Imagine Paul when he was at Caesarea, now and again being invited to have dinner with the Roman governor Felix. Felix was an old rogue, but he enjoyed listening to Paul. And Paul was a man of considerable intellectual powers (a bit more than the average Roman soldier) and therefore it made a little entertainment for Felix to converse with Paul, particularly over dinner at night when he had nothing better to do. You will imagine Felix saying to Paul, 'Now, this is marvellous—this gospel of yours. You say it was prophesied in the Old Testament?'

'Yes, sir, it was indeed.'

'Well, show me a few passages.'

And Paul reads him some from Isaiah 53 or something.

And then Felix says, 'Yes, Paul, but perhaps this could be your interpretation, couldn't it? Are there many Jewish rabbis like you that hold this interpretation that Jesus is the Messiah?'

'Well, some.'

'Oh. How many, Paul, would you say? Do the majority of Jewish rabbis agree with your interpretation of the Old Testament?'

'Not the majority, sir.'

'No, I see. Well, how many?'

'Well, there's Nicodemus. And Joseph of Arimathea agrees with me. He was a member of the Sanhedrin.'

'How many more rabbis, Paul?'

'Well, I can't think of any at the moment.'

'Ah, I see. So this is your interpretation. Well, it was very interesting. Now, have another olive. Or, let's take a sweet.'

Yes, so section three is not there by way of filling up the pages because Paul couldn't think of anything else to say at the time. It is an integral thing to the gospel because the gospel is based on the prophets. That being so, you have a problem that has to be answered if the nation to whom the prophecies were given, by and large, reject the idea that Jesus is the Messiah and therefore reject the gospel.

In section two we have the wreckage of Adam's sin and how we need to be saved from it, but the seriousness of what is discussed in section three is that Israel was one of the early examples of God beginning the plan of redemption. Israel's redemption out of Egypt stands as a great prototype of the great redemption that comes through Christ. It is bad enough if the first man went wrong and caused wreckage, but if God's scheme of redemption has gone wrong, that would be a very serious thing, wouldn't it? Paul hastens to add, as he introduces this topic, 'not that the word of God has been made of none effect' (9:6). The word of God has not gone wrong; it has not proved to be untrue.

So then he deals with this matter here because it is of such vital importance to our message of the gospel. And from mentioning the failure at the beginning of the section he comes down to the glorious, triumphant climax: '*all Israel shall be saved*' (11:26). You notice how each of these things is coming to its end in a glorious climax of whatever theme is being developed.

And here now is a doxology, not this time to the love of God as the first two were, but a doxology to the *wisdom* of God in his great providential government—how he is organizing all things, and in the end God can guarantee that Israel as a whole shall be saved.

*Appeal for our faith and service (12:1–16:27)*

With the fourth section, we are coming on now to the final great part of the epistle, what is normally called 'the practical side' of the epistle. I shall not spend the time now to declare what the major theme is here and how it comes to its climax, because I haven't got the time, except to notice this. At the beginning of the epistle and now from 12:1 to the end, Paul emphasizes the fact that this gospel is not merely for the Jew but for the Gentiles as well—that Jews and Gentiles shall be saved according to the same principles, and this shall form a great unity. Therefore, as a major tactician in the spiritual war, Paul is concerned with the practical behaviour of Jews and Gentiles, so that the behaviour of converted Jews and Gentiles as a spiritual unity shall be a worldwide testimony to the reality of the gospel. And hence in this last section Paul will campaign against sundry ideas and practices that would split the people of God and have them fractured into many different groups, which would be a sad testimony to the ineffectiveness of the gospel.

But I leave that for the moment, if I have made my point that the epistle has these four major parts to it. All I've been doing is to make the point that this analysis of this epistle to the Romans is not some arbitrary thing—imposing on the book our own ideas. It is following the major themes and their development, each to its own climax.

*The first half of section one (1:8–3:20)*

We considered what the major contents of this first part of the epistle are. Just let me remind you of them here once more.

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- |    |          |   |
|----|----------|---|
| 1. | 1:8–3:20 | The justification of God's wrath.   |
| 2. | 3:21–31  | The claim that man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.               |
| 3. | 4:1–17   | The validation of that claim: an appeal to the precedent of Abraham's experience.       |
| 4. | 4:18–25  | The definition of what is meant by faith: the analogy between Abraham's faith and ours. |
| 5. | 5:1–11   | The results and implications of justification by faith.                                 |
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This first section of the epistle is about the wrath of God, and last time we considered up to 3:20—what I have called 'The justification of God's wrath'. We find here how God is just in his wrath against sin, and how he demonstrates that mankind is without excuse on the ground of the evidence that they have been given. Where they have rejected it, they are without excuse. Now we begin our session by thinking of the second half, in which Paul is going to expound God's salvation in this regard, and how it will come to the climax: 'we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him' (5:9).

## The second half of section one (3:21–5:11)

Let us first scan the sundry arguments of this second part of section one. First of all, we see Paul establishing the claim that man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law; the statement to that effect; and why this justification has to be 'apart from the works of the law'. Argument number one is a statement of the principles of justification (3:21–31).

From that, Paul moves on to the second argument—the validation of that claim by an appeal to the precedent of Abraham's experience in the Old Testament. Paul makes the first claim as an apostle, of course, and he expounds it. Now he validates the claim by an appeal to the case law of the Old Testament: to the precedent set by Abraham's experience, then by the experience of David (4:1–17).

Then he turns to what is a very important argument—the definition of what is meant by faith. It is important because if he is going to claim that justification is by faith and it is through Christ and his blood and the propitiation that he has offered, and it is without works and solely by faith, it would be exceedingly important to explain what is meant by faith (4:18–25).

Having explained what is meant by faith, he now expounds, in the final great paragraph, all the results and implications of being justified by faith. And so, it comes to the climax that we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Christ (5:1–11).

That, then, is the second half of the first section, and we are about to study it now in some of its detail.

### Definitions and arguments in the second half of section one

#### Defining the term: justification

Let's begin by certain facts. First of all, let's consider the meaning of the technical terms that are used in this passage. We start with a familiar one: *justification*. That is the noun. The verb is *justify*. What does the term *justification* mean? What does it mean when it is said that God *justifies* us?

When we look at the word *justify*, it looks as if it meant: 'make someone just'. Consider the English word *magnify*. What does it mean to magnify something?

You say, 'It means make it big, make it large—magnify'.

Yes, from the Latin term *magnificari*.

What does *justify* mean, therefore? It comes from the Latin word *justificari*. What does that mean?

You say, 'It means to make somebody just.'

No, it doesn't. Though it appears to mean that, because of its Latin root, it is exceedingly important and absolutely foundational to the gospel to see that it does not, in the New Testament, mean 'to make somebody just'. It is the word that you would use of a judge in 'declaring' somebody just. Because of that mistake, for centuries the Roman Catholic Church has taught that salvation is a question of making us just, and that must be a very long process if you want to make us just in a practical sense. According to them it would take the whole of a lifetime, and a good deal more of uncounted years in purgatory, to accomplish the great thing of making us practically just.

But the word doesn't mean 'to make just'. How can we show that? Well, let's look to our Bible and see how it is used, first of all in the Old Testament:

If there be a controversy between men, and they come to judgement, and the judges judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked. (Deut 25:1)

You see the context. It is about a judge in court pronouncing his verdict, and the judge has to 'justify the righteous'. Now, quite clearly that doesn't mean he shall 'make the righteous, righteous'. Of course not. The 'righteous' was the man who was right. His claim was right. His opponent was wrong. This man is innocent. He is right; he is righteous in the sense of the law. The right is on his side. What the judge does is to *declare* him righteous, not make him righteous. That is, in fact, what the Hebrew verb means. I won't trouble you with that at the moment, but that's what the Hebrew word means: 'to declare righteous.'

Then see the opposite: 'and he shall condemn the wicked'. Yes, and he shall not do the opposite, of course. He shall not declare the wicked to be right or declare the man in the right to be wrong.

So, in the Old Testament it means to pronounce somebody, to declare him to be, right—to be in the right. To be in that sense, therefore, just.

Now let's look at Luke 7 in the New Testament. This is our Lord talking to the crowd, and he is talking to them about their reaction to John the Baptist and to his preaching:

And all the people when they heard [that is, heard John], and the tax gatherers, *justified* God . . .' (v. 29)

You will see at once that it cannot possibly mean that these people 'made God righteous'. Of course they didn't! God is righteous anyway. They didn't make God righteous, but they *declared* God to be right. For through John the Baptist, God had declared them to be sinners and worthy of his judgment and his wrath, and the people admitted God was right! They were sinners; they needed to repent, and they needed forgiveness. In so saying, they declared God to be right, to be just.

So, here is the meaning of the term, and we are going to find it throughout Romans 3 and following. When God justifies us, it is not a question of 'making us right', it is 'declaring us to be in the right'.

We should notice one little thing about English, but then you will know what a wonderful language English is and how it has two or three terms for the same thing. We have the term 'righteousness' and we have the term 'justice'. We have the term 'righteous' and we have the term 'just'. The 'righteous' bit comes from the Germanic side of our language, and the 'just' bit comes from the Latin side of our language. And then we use both terms for the same thing, though in common parlance there is a slight difference between them. We shall notice as we proceed that sometimes our translations use the term 'righteous', and then they use the term 'justify', because we don't have 'righteousify' as a term in English. So we have to use the two terms.

### Defining the term: propitiation

Now let's think of a second technical term. In Romans 3 we are going to come across the word *propitiatory*. I don't know what your translations read at verse 25, and I don't have the time to consult them, but the translation in front of me says,

Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by his blood, to show his righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime.

The question, therefore, is what does this term 'propitiation' mean? This is a very key term in this passage, and therefore now I assert that *propitiation* carries the meaning of 'appeasing' God—satisfying his wrath. It refers to what the Saviour has done by his death upon the cross as satisfying the wrath of God against sin.

When we come to the second half of chapter 5, and chapters 6, 7 and 8, we shall read many times of the death of Christ. We will not find there the term *propitiation*, because there we are dealing, as we saw, with the wreckage of Adam's sin and how the death of Christ delivers us from that wreckage. But here in 1-5:11 this term *propitiation* is used very precisely, because the theme is the wrath of God against sin; and our way of deliverance from God's wrath against sin is through the sacrifice of Christ that has 'satisfied' God's justice, 'appeased his wrath' against sin. So, as I say, the term 'propitiation' is very carefully used.

#### *A lesson from the tabernacle*

I must bother you with a little lesson in Hebrew and Greek (there is no extra charge). You will remember the directions for the making of the tabernacle in the Old Testament, and in particular Exodus 25 where the first vessel to be made was the ark of God, because it was the all-important vessel. It was an oblong chest made of acacia wood, overlaid inside and out with gold. It was that ark into which the tables of the *law* were placed—God's commands, with, of course, their penalties attached to them if you broke them. There was also another part to that ark, called in the old fashioned English translations the 'mercy-seat', though of course it wasn't a seat. The English translations were influenced by Luther who called it in German the *Gnadenstuhl*: the 'grace seat'. And so the English translators put 'mercy-seat'. But it wasn't a seat. It was a lid, if you like—a covering that went on top. It was made of solid gold. It had cherubim beaten out at the ends of it.

It was a lid or cover, then, and on the great Day of Atonement, when once in a year the high priest went in to the most holy place as a representative of the people, he had to take a basin filled with the blood of the animal that had been sacrificed outside on behalf of the people to atone for their sins. And he took that blood of the sacrifice and, entering into the most holy place, he sprinkled it on that lid, on that cover.

Now, that is a very interesting fact when we consider the context of this first part of Romans. Why? Because we read there not merely of God's wrath, but the occasion of that wrath: that we have broken his law. So chapter 3 comes to the conclusion of the first part of its arguments: 'We know that whatever the law says, it says to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God', exposed to his wrath because they have broken the law (see v. 19). In ancient Israel, because Israel had broken the law, they had to bring their offering. It was killed; its blood was shed. The blood was taken in

to the most holy place, to the ark that contained the law. And the law said that sin must suffer its penalty, which is death. So how could he now go into the holiest, not only for himself, but as the representative of all the people outside—all this collection of variegated sinners? How could he come and stand in the presence of God before that law, which is the basis of God's throne and government? If God could ever accept a man like that into his presence on behalf of the people to stand beside the law, it would not be because God said, 'I'm sorry I made that law so strict, wasn't it? I didn't mean it all that much. I love the lot of you, of course. Never mind the law.'

No, it never could be. That law must be upheld, the penalty paid—in sprinkling the blood on that so-called 'mercy-seat', on that lid, on that cover. The priest was saying, 'Yes, we justify God. We are sinners. We are without excuse. We have broken the law. The penalty must be paid. Here is the blood—the symbol that the penalty has been paid by our substitute.'

Of course that animal was only a substitute and a symbol. It must have been obvious to them, as it is obvious to any Jew today and to us, indeed, that the blood of bulls and goats could not possibly take away sin (see Heb 10:4). Cows don't know anything about sin, you know. They don't go to bed at night worried, with a bad conscience. Not cows! They haven't any concept of sin to start with. We have. It is the glory of human beings that we have a consciousness of right and wrong and know what sin is.

Now, the interesting thing, therefore, is the term that is used in Hebrew for that lid of gold on which the blood was shed. The word for this cover was, in Hebrew, *kapporeth*. I shall not trouble you with the basic linguistic meanings of the word, important as they are, but we haven't the time to discuss them. What is to the point is to notice how the Jews themselves translated that word into Greek when, in 280 BC in Alexandria in Egypt, they translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek. When they came to that word *kapporeth*, representing the cover, or lid, on the ark on which the blood was put, they translated it by two words. The first word was *epithema*, which simply means 'something laid on top', which is what the lid or cover was; it was laid on top of the ark. And one of the possible meanings of the term *kaphar* is 'to cover'. But then the Jews saw there was more meaning in the word than just something that covered the ark. They added an adjective, *hilasterion*, which means that it has to do with propitiation. It was the place where the blood of propitiation was sprinkled, where propitiation was made and proclaimed and accepted by God; on the basis of which, therefore, he could accept his people.

Notice that term there, if you will. Originally, in Greek that is an adjective. *Sterion* is used in Greek for referring to a place where something happens. *Hilasterion*: where propitiation is offered and accepted before God. So you've got the connection. In the Old Testament, you see the ark with the law in it—God's just requirements. Then, we see the law broken and demanding its penalty. And now when the high priest comes in, it is not the law being diminished. God insists upon the law and its penalty, but the blood sprinkled on that cover is the blood of propitiation that satisfies the wrath of God and his righteous standards, and makes it right for him, therefore, to pardon and accept repentant sinners. It is this word *hilasterion* that is used here in Romans 3:25 to describe Christ. 'God has set him forth as an *hilasterion*.'

Therefore, it is helpful to remember the history of that word in the Old Testament. What is the context here? Yes, the law of God. It is plain for anybody to see, even without spectacles. The law of God is the context, and it condemns us, and our mouths are shut. We have nothing to say for ourselves. We deserve a penalty. How on earth can we be saved? It is through Christ as the *hilasterion*. He is the place where we can come and meet God. His is the sacrifice of propitiation that satisfies the wrath of God and appeases God, so that God can remain just and true to the standards of his law, and yet declare us to be right with him.

Let me then pause just to say this again. Notice how precise and coherent are the terms that Paul uses in Scripture. Scripture is precise, and one of the educational values of studying Scripture is that it begins to sharpen our thinking and make us precise in our thinking. It makes us logical—as well as simple, of course.

So we have got our technical terms, then. Now we had better start looking at the arguments. We have already considered some of them. Let's come down to the actual chapter.

### **The arguments in section one**

First of all then, there was the wrath of God (1:8–3:20). Man is without excuse. *The wrath of God now* is demonstrated in the fact that when men reject him, it has, by God's own arrangement, repercussions on their reasoning faculties, on their bodies and on their sexual relationships. This is the wrath of God, now in action. God has built us that way. You can't reject God without its having very serious repercussions on your rational processes and upon your bodily behaviour. You can't reject the Creator without it diminishing your dignity as a human being. Paul also discusses *God's wrath in the future*: God's wrath and the day of judgment.

Now Paul turns to describing God's salvation in this context. Let's notice some of the details. It is always good to get a comprehension of a whole passage rather than to get lost in the details to start with. Salvation in this kind of context will mean being *justified*, that is, 'declared to be in the right'. It is a word you use of God as judge, with us sinners standing before him. Sinners though we are, he is able, through Christ, to pronounce all who have repented and trusted the Saviour to be in the right as far as he is concerned; to acquit them, if you like, of all charge; to declare them, therefore, to be righteous in the sight of God. It does not mean to make them righteous, but to declare them righteous.

It is freely and by his grace. It is because of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. And it is because Christ Jesus is the *propitiatory*. And now we shall notice the significance of that term and its precise meaning. It deals with the wrath of God. It satisfies God and his sense of justice. This process of God declaring us in the right, on our side is through our faith, but on his side it is through the propitiation that is in Christ. Notice you need both. Though Christ has offered the propitiating sacrifice, it doesn't mean that everybody in the world is automatically declared just with God. Only those that have faith in Christ are thus covered.

'What is more', says Paul, 'this salvation is through God's righteousness, that God himself might be just and the justifier' (see 3:25–26). It is a marvellous thing: it is not just an exhibition of God's mercy. Salvation through the death and propitiation that is in Christ is an expression of God's *justice*.

I remember in my youth being in a certain place, when I was taken out by a senior brother who was (I am sure he was, and he certainly thought himself to be) a good theologian. And



on the walk, he did what some old boys are apt to do from time to time. He thought to examine me and my faith. And he said to me, 'David, my boy, what are you trusting in for your salvation?'

And as I replied I was about to say, 'In the grace of Christ, in the grace of God.' Then I mercifully caught on in due time how he wanted to trick me a little bit, and I replied, 'I am trusting in the justice of God.' I got full marks, ten out of ten, for that reply.

It is by grace we are saved, yes, of course it is! The magnificent thing is we can trust in the very *justice* of God! God is just when he justifies the ungodly. He is just to do it, righteous to do it, because the propitiating sacrifice of Christ has upheld the law.

And so this section is going to say that salvation—justification—is apart from the law. It is not on the grounds of our keeping the law, not something we attain to at last by our painful struggles to keep the law throughout our life. It is apart from the law, and yet, in another very important sense, it establishes the law. What it means, by 'establishing the law', we shall have to think in our next session.

## **Conclusion**

I hope it is now becoming clear what are the central arguments of this great first section of the epistle. The major theme is God's wrath against our sin. We are not only sinners but guilty sinners, and he is perfectly just in his condemnation of our sin. We stand before him, our mouths shut, without excuse, open to the penalty of God's law. But there is a salvation. If we will justify God, and say, 'God is right, we deserve that penalty', then God has a salvation for us, through Jesus Christ—the propitiation for our sins whose sacrifice satisfies the law of God, upholds the righteousness of God, and makes it just and righteous of our God to declare those who put their faith in Christ to be in the right with him; to have legal status: acquitted, accepted, in the right, with the judge of the whole universe. So we can be sure of our salvation resting, not merely in his grace (that is magnificent in itself), but in his very righteousness.

So let's get hold of those basic principles, then in our second session we shall think about some of the details. It is time for coffee.

## Justification Apart From the Law

### *We Shall be Saved From the Wrath of God—Part 2*

#### **Why it must be by grace**

We now need to apply ourselves to the actual text of Scripture and consider some of its detail. We begin at Romans 3:19.

Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be brought under the judgement of God: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. (vv. 19–20)

Let's notice the logic of that argument: 'by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified'. Why is that so? Why can it not be that a man with all honest intent should try to keep the law and thereby be justified? That is a practical point that many people of the religious kind will raise to you if you try to talk to them about salvation not being by works. And they have a problem. They will say, 'Why then did God give us the law if he didn't mean us to keep it? And doesn't the Old Testament proclaim the law of God as leading to life? "Choose life—do these commandments"' (see Deut 30:15–16).

Now, that is perfectly true. The law, as a guide to living, is a very healthy guide. The whole of society would be more healthy if it kept the law of God. And as we shall find later in this epistle, the purpose behind and before our being justified by grace is that, though we are not saved by our keeping the law, yet it is God's intention that 'the righteous demands of the law shall be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit' (see 8:4). 'The law is good,' says Paul (see 7:12). The fact that I don't keep it is irrelevant to this question. Is the law good and spiritual? Yes, it is good, and it is spiritual!

It is understandable, therefore, that many an unregenerate person does not at first comprehend why salvation must be without the works of the law. 'Cannot a man make an honest attempt to keep the law and therefore contribute to his own salvation?' The answer is given in the second part of verse 20. The first part states that, 'by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.' The second part of the verse gives the reason for that: 'for by the law comes the knowledge of sin.' We should never imagine that it doesn't matter what the law says, but however honestly and determinedly we set out to keep it, if we use the law as our standard, we come short of it. It is the law that makes us aware of our sin.

Paul tells us in Philippians 3 that for a major part of his life, before he knew Christ, he had made a valiant effort to keep the law. And as touching the righteous character that is formed

by keeping the law, he was blameless—not 'faultless' but 'blameless' (see 3:3–6). Yet he tells us in Romans 7 that eventually the law was above all his attempts to keep it, and through the law he came to be aware that he was a sinner and had come short. 'By the law comes the knowledge of sin' (see v. 7). That is why salvation—justification—cannot possibly be on the basis of our keeping the law. And 'now apart from the law a righteousness of God . . .' (that is, God's way of acquitting us and remaining righteous himself) 'is manifested' (see 3:21). And this is not simply a 'Christian' doctrine. It is 'witnessed by the law and the prophets.' And you will immediately think of certain passages, in the Prophets in particular, and Isaiah 53 preeminent among them, that speak of the provision of a salvation, in spite of the fact that 'all we like sheep have gone astray; and have turned every one to his own way . . . the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all' (v. 6).

### **Justification apart from the law (3:20–31)**

#### **Justified freely by grace (3:20–24)**

Let's hear the facts about this righteousness that is apart from the law. It is a 'righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction' (v. 22). Notice the 'all' and the insistence that there is no distinction. In the context, Paul is thinking about the idea of a distinction between the pagan heathen (chapter 1), the moralist heathen (chapter 2), or the religious Jew (the first half of chapter 3). There is no difference. Whether you had God's revealed law or not, there is no difference; all 'have sinned' in the past and 'do' in the present 'fall short of the glory of God', that is, fall short of the standards that God in his character and in his law has set. But since there is no difference, all (likewise without difference) can be justified *freely*. The Greek word means: 'free and for nothing', 'gratis', 'without charge'—'being justified freely by his grace'. But it is 'through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus' (v. 24). It isn't that God is so gracious that in the end he'll have mercy upon anybody. Grace is the cause of, the source of, justification; but it is absolutely necessary that the justification is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

#### **Redemption in Christ, a propitiatory (3:25)**

In what sense is it 'in Christ Jesus'? Not in his *example* but as the *propitiation*. This is exceedingly important. The substitutionary doctrine of the atonement—that he took my place, as my substitute, and the propitiation that he sacrificed appeased the wrath of God against my sin and therefore I can go free—is disputed, for instance, by the modern Orthodox Church, not just the Catholic Church. You will find this if you read Bishop Timothy Ware of Oxford who belongs to the Orthodox Church. He has written a book on orthodoxy, meaning by that, the doctrines of the Orthodox Church as distinct from the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> The Orthodox Church does not believe in purgatory. They do believe in the resurrection of Christ, of course. But in that book he explicitly denies the substitutionary aspect of the death of Christ. He says that Christ suffered at Calvary to show us how to suffer, and that it is by our own

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<sup>7</sup> *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Eastern Christianity*, London, Penguin: 1963.

suffering that we are forgiven and justified and set free. That is what Dostoyevsky, the great Russian author, expounded in his novels. Some people have written books about *The Gospel in Dostoyevsky*, but they surely missed that bit. Dostoyevsky held that it is by our suffering that we are justified and set free, and that Christ came and suffered to show us how to do it. I'm not sure how true Timothy Ware is to the councils of the Orthodox Church, but according to him he denies the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement.

More recently, a well-known Evangelical in the UK announced to the world that you cannot have the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement because if God punished Christ in our place, he would be guilty of child abuse. That was by an Evangelical, published to the world.<sup>8</sup>

We have to here hold hard to Scripture in the midst of all the multitudinous interpretations of the death of Christ. This one we must hold to, as to all Scriptures, of course. In 1 Peter 2, the sufferings of Christ are held out to us as an example that we should follow his steps (v. 21). But here in Romans it is not the example side of his sufferings but the propitiatory side of his sufferings: by the shedding of his blood (v. 25). And now we notice the term: *propitiation*. On our side, it is 'through faith'. On his side, it is by the shedding of his blood to pay the penalty of our sin to satisfy the wrath of God. And this is to show God's righteousness.

### **To show God's righteousness (3:25–26)**

The salvation he provides is, of course, totally in agreement with his divine standard for what is just and right. It is to show his righteousness in two respects. First: 'because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God' (v. 25). If you want to know what that means, another Scripture you could refer to is found in Paul's address to the Areopagus: 'The times of ignorance God overlooked' (Acts 17:30). That is, he didn't visit it with his divine punishment. Here in Romans we read of, 'the passing over of sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God', because not only the ungodly but the righteous sinned. Abraham, Enoch, Moses, David, Hannah, Sarah, being justified by faith, nevertheless sinned, didn't they? Why did God not visit them with his wrath for their sins? How could God be just in declaring Abraham just? It says Abraham 'believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness' (4:3). How could that possibly be if Abraham, as the history shows us, still sinned from time to time? On what basis could God possibly pronounce him to be just? Here is the answer. God's forbearance in those old times was because of the propitiatory sacrifice that was to come. The value of that propitiation extended backwards to the beginning of time.

It shows his righteousness in a second respect: 'For showing, I say, his righteousness at this present season' (v. 26). Paul doesn't mean, 'Now it is autumn or spring of this year', so not *season* in that sense. He means, 'this present time'—this present Christian dispensation since the Lord Jesus has come and suffered at Calvary. The coming of the Holy Spirit has begun this new dispensation of God's grace. 'To show God's righteousness at this season: that he might himself be just [that is, 'remain just'], and yet the justifier of him that has faith in Jesus' (see v. 26).

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<sup>8</sup> The reference is to Steve Chalke who published this view, along with Alan Mann, in their 2003 book *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003).

Notice the exact terminology: 'has faith in Jesus.' Abraham didn't know that the Son of God would be called 'Jesus', did he? No one else knew that until the angel told Joseph and Mary. Notice therefore the significance of saying, not just 'in Christ', but faith 'in Jesus', that is, the one who was born of a virgin, suffered at Calvary and is now in glory.

### **Apart from the law yet establishes the law (3:27-31)**

'Where then is the glorying?' (v. 27). What's that got to do with anything? Well, this is a very basic principle of God's demands on men. It is stated in Jeremiah and again in 1 Corinthians. So, let's turn over to 1 Corinthians 1 just to see the point in another context. Paul is expounding God's way of salvation through the cross, which is foolishness to the Greeks and a positive scandal to the Jews. And he ends that chapter:

and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God. (vv. 28-29)

It is a number one principle of man's true relationship before God that 'no flesh should glory before God'. Why is that? Because anything good you have, you got from him. It would be stupid and inappropriate and an insult to God for us to start 'glorying in' what we have as though we were something special and the credit belonged to us! 'Let not the rich man boast in his riches' (Jer 9:23). Let him be glad of them, enjoy them, use them, but not boast himself as superior because of them. 'Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom' (v. 23). We should be wise; we should love wisdom. That means we should be *philosophers* because philosophy means: 'the love of wisdom'. (And if we should love wisdom we are philosophers, aren't we?) But let not a man put his basic trust in his wisdom, and glory in that. Let not the rich man put his basic trust and confidence in his riches. Let not the strong man put his basic trust and confidence in that, and glory in that.

You see, the meaning of the term *glory*; it is a bit difficult to put in one word in English. To 'boast', yes, if you like, but it also implies a basic confidence. 'Let not the man that puts on his armour *glory* as the man who puts it off' (1 Kgs 20:11). That's a little bit of practical advice to men in the ancient world who went out fighting. They might trust in their armour, but you wait until the battle is over and you've won it before you put your trust in your armour in the same way. So, 'Let not the warrior who goes out in armour *boast* as he that puts off his armour.'

This question of our glorying, then, is: what is our basic confidence in and what therefore do we exult in and pride ourselves on? This lies at the heart of our relationship with God. And therefore when it comes to salvation in particular, it immediately comes up:

Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? of works? No: but by a law of faith. (v. 27)

'Where then is glorying?' Well, 'It is excluded' by this very principle of justification.

'By what manner of law is it excluded?' he asks. Or, if you like, 'By what manner of principle?' The word *law* has various connotations in Greek and therefore in Paul's writing. Here he means 'by what manner of principle is this glory excluded?'

'Is it by works?' Well, no. If justification depended on our works then in the end we should have to have confidence in our work, wouldn't we? And you will have found it in your personal work explaining the gospel to religious people in particular. You say you are saved and, if they are polite, they look at you with a little bit of reserve; and if they're not polite they'll say you're daft! 'You're saying you're better than we are!'

You should be aware that when you say you are saved and sure of it, you are causing many religious people an underlying insecurity. They are doing their best to keep God's law, and they hope that they are succeeding. They hope at the final judgment, if they don't get a starred first in their final exams, they will get at least an allowed second, or possibly a third, or maybe an allowed pass (that is for people who come below the bottom line and are allowed on conditions of mercy to pass). And you come along and tell them that you are certain of salvation. Well, they're not! If you are and can be, that is suggesting that they aren't doing enough. No wonder they fight you. You are making them feel very insecure. Therefore you have to explain this next bit, that in claiming to be justified, you are not claiming anything on your own merit. In fact, your confidence isn't in you but in God, and is altogether of his grace. 'We conclude therefore', or 'We reckon therefore'; that is, 'Here is our conclusion'. 'We conclude therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law' (see v. 28).

Now comes another question. Is this available only for Jews? No, indeed not. 'Is he not the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also' (v. 29). And verse 30 adds that both Jews and Gentiles shall be saved on the exact same principle: 'by faith' or 'through faith', whichever way you put it.

Now verse 31 comes as a capstone on this particular part of the argument. As you will see, the major theme is that justification is apart from the law; it is through the death of Christ; it is through God's grace; it is through Christ's blood; it is by faith on our side. But in saying that justification is not by the works of the law, do we 'make the law of no effect?' Are we, therefore, saying that the law doesn't matter, that we are saved by grace so it doesn't matter what the law says? Do we thus undermine the law? Here, therefore, it would be very important to see why justification by faith does not undermine the law. Indeed, it is useful to turn the tables on those folks who think salvation is by keeping the works of the law to show that it is *they* who undermine the law.

I remember years ago being taken by a friend of mine to meet one of his business friends. My friend and I were involved in a gospel campaign outside the city of Cambridge; and this friend of his invited both of us to tea. She was a wealthy woman. She hadn't attended the meetings, of course, but she enquired of my friend: 'Tell me, what do you say to the people in your tent thing?' So, he told her. And in the course of doing that he talked about salvation and how you could be sure of salvation.

'Oh no,' she said, 'no one can we be sure of salvation.' So, she turned to me. I was young (and in those days handsome, but that was a long while ago), and she said, 'What about you? Are you sure of salvation?'

I said, 'Yes madam, I am indeed.'

'Oh no,' she said. 'You are a very good living man, of course. I can see that. But you know, you are only starting out in life, and you might make some bad mistakes later on, of course. And what will happen to you then?'

I said, 'I should still be saved, shouldn't I?'

'Well, no of course not,' she said.

'Oh,' I said, 'I don't understand that. I thought I would be. Well, why not? I mean, what does my faith depend on?'

'It depends on your works, my boy,' she said, 'and on how well you keep God's law. And you might make a mistake.'

So, I said, 'Well, madam, what about you? When you arrive before God's judgment throne, what do you think God will say about you? Will he say that you have striven enough and done well enough?'

Well, she obviously hadn't anticipated that too realistically. And she said, 'Well, I think God will say, "Look, you did go astray there, my dear, and you did what was wrong. But then consider only how provoked you were. There is your sin, but on the whole, well, I'm merciful, and do come in".'

I said, 'He won't say anything of the sort.'

She said, 'How do you know?'

I said, 'Because he's already written down what he will say.' I quoted her this verse: 'that every mouth might be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God' (see 3:19).

I can see the woman's face now: she went pale white. 'God will never damn me!' she said.

Now, look what she was implying. She was admitting she didn't keep the law as it should be kept, but in the end God will say, 'Well, all things considered my dear, you did come short, but it doesn't matter.'

That is to *undermine* the law. Whereas God's way of salvation *maintains* the law. How does it do so? By demanding that when we come short of the law, however little or much, the penalty of that coming short must be paid so that the honour of the law shall be one hundred percent upheld. It is thus upheld through the sacrifice of Christ.

This has been but a superficial exposition, but notice how every phrase in that statement is important. We need to grasp every step in the argument and the point of each separate statement.

## The argument of Romans 4

Now comes chapter 4. Let's look at our layout of the argumentation in this section. What I am concerned about is not trying to expound every verse in this chapter (we haven't the time in these sessions), but to get across the importance of following the logic of the arguments.

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4:1-8	1. The experience of Abraham according to Genesis 15:6: faith is reckoned for righteousness as an act of God's grace.
	2. The experience of David according to Psalm 32:1-2: iniquities forgiven: righteousness reckoned apart from works; sin not reckoned.
4:9-12	The relation of the institution of circumcision to justification.
4:13-16	The relation of the LAW to the PROMISES. The analogy between:
4:17-22	1. Abraham's faith;
4:23-25	2. Our faith.

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Why does the argument we have in chapter 4 now come in here? It is a little bit frustrating when you first meet it. Chapter 5 is going to list the marvellous benefits of justification. Why doesn't he proceed immediately from what we've just thought through in chapter 3 to telling us the benefits? Why all this in between, and is it largely irrelevant anyway?

No, of course it isn't irrelevant; it is an integral part of Paul's exposition of the principle of justification by faith. And in the first place, it answers the question as follows: If justification is by faith, what do you mean by *faith*? He will explain that at the end of chapter 4. But the first thing he does is to cite biblical authority for the principle of justification by faith. For as he pointed out in chapter 1, the gospel of Christ—the gospel of God, was promised before by his prophets in the holy Scriptures 'concerning his Son' (see 1:1–3). This doctrine of justification by faith, therefore, is not a novelty thought up by Paul. Now, to prove that point, Paul cites his Old Testament authority; he cites what the lawyers might call a *precedent*—a case that has gone before and has already been settled and has established a precedent. It is then an example of case law.

### **The experience of Abraham (4:1–5)**

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? (4:1)

Of course now he is answering the objection of the Jew who put his trust in the Old Testament and to whom the doctrine of justification by faith might sound a bit curious when he first heard it. But Paul is saying, 'My dear Jewish friend, my fellow Jew, what I am preaching to you is straight Old Testament!'

If you want to have the very foundation of the Jewish race, of course, you have to go back to Abraham, not to Moses. It was Abraham that was the father of the faithful, not Moses. Abraham was the first Hebrew. And what do we read about Abraham therefore?

If Abraham was justified by works, he has whereof to glory . . . (v. 2)

That is, he would have something to glory in before his fellow men. He could say, 'Well, I'm justified, but I did manage things better than you did.' Even so, it would not be appropriate for him to glory before God. What determines that is not a matter of how you might like to interpret the Old Testament; it is what the Old Testament actually says: 'For what says the Scripture?' (v. 3).

We haven't the time, but it is important actually when appeal is made to Scripture to read it and see what it actually says. This is Genesis. Does anybody here confess to know where this was stated in the Old Testament? Genesis 15:6 is one of the basic texts of our faith: 'And [Abraham] believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.' Here in Romans 4 we have it quoted:

What says the Scripture? 'And Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.' (v. 3)



Now we have the difference between works and grace, because he has stated in the end of chapter 3 that it is by the grace of God: 'being justified freely by his grace' (v. 24). Well, what does he mean by *grace*?

Now to him that works, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. (4:4-5)

You see, the difference between works and grace is altogether important if you are going to understand what you mean by *grace*. Here we should remember that in many circles (the Roman Catholic Church is one of them, but also in high Anglicanism and a good many other versions of Christianity) they will agree with you that salvation is by grace. But if you should probe deeper, they will say that it is by God's grace that we are able to do the works that qualify for salvation. We have to do the works; the works have to come up to standard, and they have to qualify for salvation. But if and when we qualify by our works for salvation, we shall then admit of course, 'Well, it was God's grace that helped me to do the works.'

Is that what you mean by grace, when you say 'We are justified by grace'? God gives us the grace to do the works that qualify for being justified? No, it is not! It is important to define our terms, and here is Paul, the master at doing it, defining his terms as he goes along:

to him that works, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. (v. 4)

And as multitudes of preachers have pointed out, if you are working for £150 a week, or whatever it is you get, and you get to the end of the week and the boss gives you your wages, you don't say, 'Oh, how gracious of you to give me £150!' He owes it to you. If he didn't give it to you, it would be committing an offence against the law. You could sue him for it. You've done the work; you've earned the wages; the boss is indebted to you. It is a frightful thought for anybody to get it into his head that the salvation of God is by our works and God, so to speak, is indebted to us, that we put God in our debt, and he is obliged to give us salvation. That is absolute nonsense. Grace means the opposite of that. Notice the next verse.

To him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. (v. 5)

So here is the definition of what we mean by *grace*. It is not of works: 'to him that works not but believes . . .'. And God justifies those who are here described as 'the ungodly'. They don't have to become saints before he justifies them. They don't have to improve themselves before he justifies them. God can justify the ungodly that believe, and he is righteous to do so because of the propitiation that is in Christ.

I was travelling to Cork once on a train from Dublin, and it was pretty full. When I got into the compartment I saw a seat vacant beside a priest, so I thought, 'That might be a place to sit.' So, I sat beside the dear priest and got out a Greek New Testament. (I have to confess I did it on purpose.) And I sat, doing no harm to anybody, just reading the Greek New Testament. And as I suspected, so it happened; his curiosity got to such a pitch he couldn't resist saying to me: 'I see you're reading.'

'Yes.'

'What is that you're reading?'

'The New Testament.'

'Oh, you must be a very good man to be reading the New Testament on the train. But what is that language? Is that Latin?'

I said, 'No, it's not Latin. It's Greek.'

'Greek? Well, you must be a very good man. Why do you read it?'

'Well,' I said, 'I read it because, you see, I'm one of those people that has found salvation, and I am absolutely sure of salvation, and that's why I like to read this.'

'Oh yes,' he said. 'But you can't be sure of salvation, you know.'

I said, 'What? Can't I? I thought I could. Why not?'

He said, 'Salvation all depends on your works, doesn't it?'

I said, 'I didn't know that.'

'Yes,' he said. 'You see, the parable that the Lord Jesus taught of men who were given the talent shows us that. They came before him and some had worked well with their talent, and they were rewarded. Then there came a miserable chap who hadn't worked, you see. And you know what happened to him? He was put in the bad place. You have to work to get salvation.'

I said, 'I never knew that that meant that. I'll tell you what it was I was reading, here, for instance.' So, I read it out to him from this aforesaid Greek: 'To him that works, the reward is not reckoned as of grace but as of debt. But to him that works not but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness.'

'See? Exactly so!' he said. 'You see, you have to work!'

I said, 'Half a minute. Let me read the next verse: "But to him that works not . . .", I said, 'what about him?'

'Oh, he's no good. I mean he's no good whatsoever. He'll be in danger of going to the bad place.'

I said, 'That's very curious what you say. Let me read the whole verse: "But to him that works not but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness".'

'I don't know what that means,' he said. 'I've never read that before. I don't know what it means. But then Paul was an old rascal, wasn't he?'

So, yes, it is important how you define the word *grace*. When it comes to justification by God's grace, it does not mean God gives us the grace to do the works that merit the salvation. It means it is not by works; it is of God's own undeserved grace and favour.

### **The blessing David knew (4:6-8)**

He quotes Abraham; and he also quotes David. Abraham was justified; so was David, but here it was a question of forgiveness.

Even as David pronounced blessing upon the man, unto whom God reckons righteousness apart from works, saying, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not reckon sin.' (vv. 6-8)

When David wrote the psalm quoted here (Ps 51), he was repenting over a grievous sin that he did. Would God, in the legal sense, hold that sin against him eternally? We are thinking then not only of the negative side being cancelled and being declared righteous. The question is now: but would that still leave the sin to be faced and to be punished in the sense of eternal punishment? No, the sin was covered from that point of view. God sent Nathan to tell David so (2 Sam 12). He was forgiven—not by works. In the context by definition it is not by works, but he received forgiveness.

It is the two sides of forgiveness therefore. First: pronounced right with God; and, second: our sins blotted out from the record, in the sense that they will not be brought up against us in the final judgment.

*What it means that God will not remember sins*

Just let me turn aside to remind you of the meaning of the basic terminology. When, according to the new covenant, God promises that 'our sins and iniquities he will remember no more' (see Jer 31:34; Heb 8:12) that does not mean that God will forget that we have been sinners. The notion that God will do so is impossible, of course, if you take notice of what the choirs of heaven are singing:

Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. (Rev 5:9  
ESV)

When we get home to heaven and hear the choir singing it, we shall not nudge our fellow standing beside us and say, 'Look here, I don't understand this bit. Why was the Lamb wounded in the first place anyway?'

Shall we forget that we once were sinners? Will God look upon his dear Son and say, 'I can't think why he was wounded at Calvary. I can't think what that was about'? No, none will ever forget that, surely. What it means is as follows. In an ancient court, like the court of David and other kings in Judah, there were sundry court officials. There was the man over the house; he was the chief steward, the major-domo. He ran the palace and all its affairs. He organized the law courts—the King's Bench Division. He organized royal visitors and received diplomats and ambassadors, and did all that kind of thing. He was over the palace. Then there was the head of the armed forces. He was captain of the host. Then there was a fellow called, in Old English, a *recorder* or 'the Remembrancer'. Both words mean the same, of course. He was the man that kept the records of all the good things people had done and the bad things they had done.

From time to time, the king would summon the recorder to his presence and get him to read out the record in the books. So, one of the Persian Kings couldn't sleep one night, and he told the recorder to come, and he had to read him the books (see Esther 6). And the Remembrancer would come across this certain man who had done some grievous thing; he plotted an assassination or something. 'Well,' the king would want to know, 'has he been dealt with? Has he been punished?'

'No?'

'Well punish him then.'

'This man has done some good.'

'Has he been rewarded?'

'Well, not yet.'

'Well, get about and do it then!'

That is what is meant by a *remembrance* of sin. And when God remembers people's sins, in that sense, then the punishment follows. What God has promised to do is this: 'Their sins and iniquities, I will not [in that sense] bring up before the court of my justice, examine them and then execute the penalty. Their sins and iniquities I will not remember anymore because the penalty has already been paid.'

### *Reviewing the argument so far*

What will verse 9 add? Verses 9–12 will add the question of when exactly Abraham was justified. Let's look at this outline again because the argument is detailed and complicated.

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4:1–8	1. The experience of Abraham according to Genesis 15:6: faith is reckoned for righteousness as an act of God's grace.
	2. The experience of David according to Psalm 32:1–2: iniquities forgiven: righteousness reckoned apart from works; sin not reckoned.
4:9–12	The relation of the institution of circumcision to justification.
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In chapter 4, Paul is citing the Old Testament as biblical authority for the idea of justification by faith (vv. 1–8). He quotes the experience of Abraham as a legal precedent, as case law. If Abraham was justified that way then the precedent tells us that everybody can be justified that way. And if they are going to be justified, they must be justified *that* way. The experience of Abraham then, according to Genesis 15:6, was that 'Abraham believed God and his faith was reckoned for righteousness', as an act of God's grace.

The experience of David is cited, again as case law, as precedent. It is cited as Old Testament authority for the doctrine of justification by faith through grace. His iniquities were forgiven, that is, the negative side was cancelled. His sin was not reckoned, that is, it was not brought before God for his judgment on it. Righteousness was reckoned apart from works. Here is Paul the Evangelist, because if you are going to evangelize Jews you had better have the case from Scripture! And, anyway, it is the word of God and authoritative.

Now we come to the next two points. The relation of the institution of circumcision to justification (vv. 9–12), and the relation of the law to the promises that God made to Abraham (vv. 13–16).

### **The relation of the institution of circumcision to justification (4:9–12)**

In verses 9–12 the question arises: when exactly was Abraham justified? Was it before he was circumcised or after he was circumcised?

You say, 'What does it matter *when* he was circumcised?'

Oh, it matters a lot. Because if he were circumcised before he was justified, you could argue (and the Jews would argue): 'Yes, but you see he was justified because he was already circumcised, and then his justification was one step further. And you have to be circumcised in order to qualify for salvation.'

And you see what a practical problem that was if you study Acts 15:

But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

(vv. 1-2 ESV)

When Paul and Barnabas and others from Antioch came to Jerusalem to the council, some who were of the Pharisees who believed said, 'Look here, you can't tell Gentiles that they are simply justified by faith. To be justified, to be saved, they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses.'

The apostles had to face the question and lay down the principle beyond all doubt. It was of course that we are justified by faith—not only Jews, but also Gentiles. Jew and Gentile stand on the same platform and ground. We are justified—not by circumcision, not by the works of the law, but through faith.

And here in Romans, Paul is pointing out the historical basis for that argument. When was Abraham circumcised? Does anybody here remember what chapter in Genesis Abraham's circumcision is recorded? Yes, in chapter 17. What chapter is it where he was justified? Yes, it is in chapter 15. Now you see an implication: Paul regards the very historical order of the events in Genesis as being inspired authoritatively. The chronology is important. Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, and that shows us that justification does not depend upon circumcision. This is the biblical authority for it. Later on he was circumcised, and so all his posterity had to be circumcised as a signal, among other things, that they were physically descended from Abraham. But the point remains that if Abraham was justified without circumcision, and circumcision therefore is not necessary to salvation, the fact that all subsequent male descendants of Abraham were circumcised, shows that, important as that sign was, it did not gain salvation for them. It did not even help to save them. Their justification had to be on the same basis as that of Abraham, which is what these verses tell us.

### **The relation of the law to the promises (4:13-16)**

There is a second thing, which is the relation of the law to the promises of God. God made all sorts of promises to Abraham. He promised that in him and in his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed. He promised him that his seed would possess the world. I cannot now go into the details of those explicit promises. But now and again the question comes: 'When those promises were made to Abraham, that through him and his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed, and when God gave a promise in the covenant to Abraham of

a possession of the land, were those dependent on his being circumcised?' No, indeed not! Those promises were made to Abraham and to his seed before he was circumcised, according to Genesis 15. And why is it important to get hold of that? Let's read Romans 4:14: 'For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect'. Meaning: if the inheritance were by the law then all you have to do is to keep the law and you would get it; faith would become irrelevant. Secondly, faith is made 'of none effect': faith would be irrelevant in the context. But then if it were of the law, the promise will become 'of none effect' because we can't keep the law, 'for the law works wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there transgression' (v. 15). You can't transgress a law that isn't there; but once the law comes in, any breach of it is a transgression. But notice why it is of faith then and not of the law:

For this cause it is a faith, that it may be according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed; not only to that which is of the law [that is, Jews], but to them also which are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. (v. 16)

That is a large topic, and I haven't the time now to discourse upon it in detail. I want to bring it to your attention because it is an important argument about the gospel that, in my experience, many believers miss. They are so glued to the notion that Abraham was promised an earthly inheritance in the land of Canaan (good for him), but we Christians are promised, not an inheritance on earth (dear me, that's rather below our dignity), but an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for us (1 Pet 1:4). So that we are not interested in the covenant made with Abraham, nor in the inheritance that that covenant guaranteed to him.

I'd like to read to you a verse in Galatians 3 that reminds us of what we inherit through Abraham:

I speak after the manner of men: though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it has been confirmed, no one makes it void, or adds to it. Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He says not, 'And to seeds', as of many; but as of one, 'And to your seed', which is Christ. (vv. 15-16)

So, Paul is saying that when God made this covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15 (the very same chapter in which Abraham was justified) God made a covenant with him and with his seed to give him a certain inheritance. The word *seed* was meant primarily by God to indicate Abraham's seed, 'which is Christ'.

Now, you might find that a bit steep until you've had time to think about it. I ask you just to accept the fact because you happen to believe the Bible, and the New Testament in particular is inspired and wouldn't dare contradict it. So, in the covenant God made with Abraham and his seed, 'the seed is Christ', says Paul. And it was to that seed that God promised this great inheritance, yes? It was promised to Christ? Anybody got any serious objection to Christ inheriting the promised inheritance? No? I mean, after all, it started off by being some acres in the Middle East—a land in the Middle East. Does anyone here have any objection to Christ being heir to that? I mean, you wouldn't think it is unworthy of Christ to

claim an *earthly* inheritance, would you? Would it be less than spiritual of Christ to think of that? Wasn't he content with a heavenly inheritance?

No, no! Half a minute! He is going to rule from shore to shore! He is going to claim dominion over this planet, and any others that exist, anyway. So, Christ is going to inherit it because he is Abraham's seed. But now look at the end of the chapter:

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for you all are one man in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. (vv. 27-29)

If you've not seen that before, you might feel yourself richer than you ever imagined you were. You are an heir to the promises covenanted to Abraham about this great inheritance, because it was promised to Abraham and his seed, and now by God's grace you have been incorporated into Christ, you have put on Christ! You are Abraham's seed therefore, and if you are Abraham's seed you are heirs, in the terms of that covenant: 'to you and your seed'. Now, do it internally and don't disturb the peace, but shout a quiet 'Hallelujah!' You are richer than you might have imagined!

That being so, if you have got any common sense in your head and any practicality, you will want to know: is that inheritance secure for me? On what ground is this given? Was it given after the law was given or before the law was given? Well, historically there's no doubt about it. Abraham was justified before the law was given. Abraham was given this covenant of inheritance before the law was given, and the law that came over four hundred years afterwards (v. 17) cannot change that covenant to make it of no effect. It did not depend on the law but on God's gracious promise that Abraham believed. And the reason why it is through faith and grace is this, as we come back to Romans 4:

For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to grace; to the end that the promise may be *sure* to all the seed . . . (Rom 4:16)

Do shout 'Hallelujah!' What magnificent things these are. The promise is absolutely sure, but you will have to study your Old Testament to see the chronology of it. The justification came, when? Before the law. The promise and the covenant came, when? Before the law. Justification by faith came before Abraham was even circumcised, and the covenant that guarantees the inheritance (Genesis 15 again) before he was circumcised. That is important. It is the inspired and authoritative chronology of God's great acts of salvation in the Old Testament.

So, here is Old Testament authority and precedent. You mustn't forget that Paul was a lawyer, not a Roman lawyer (though he knew a bit about that); he was a Jewish lawyer before he got converted.

### **The analogy between Abraham's faith and our faith (4:17-25)**

Before we come to enjoy all the wonderful details of the effects of our justification in 5:1-11, we should ask what the rest of chapter 4 is about. Now we come to the part that is going to illustrate for us what Romans means by faith.

You will notice now a difference in the nature of the argument at this point. When it comes to being justified, and the grounds of that being by faith and the inheritance and the promises, Paul cites Abraham's case as that of an actual man—a man walking on two legs who was literally justified. And he asks on what principle Abraham was justified. Abraham is not a *type*, at this stage. We are not talking typology; we are talking about a literal man who was literally justified, who was literally given a covenant of this inheritance. It was an actual case. And it is established as a precedent that is valid for us as well. But now when it comes to the fact that, 'Abraham *believed* God' and it was 'received by faith', what do you mean by *faith*?

It is important because, as somebody mentioned in the interval, if you try to tell some people that we are justified by faith without works they will say, 'But even faith is a work, isn't it?' Well, there is a Scripture that says something to that effect—that the 'work of God is that you should believe on him', but what it means by 'work' in that context is another point, of course (see John 6:29). But let us adhere to this for the moment. Paul is now going to use *analogy*: one thing like another thing. And why he has to do that is obvious, isn't it? What was it that he believed God about? Faith is always a response to what God has said. What was it that Abraham believed God about when it is said that he 'believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness' (see Gen 15:6)? Was it that he believed Jesus had died for his sins? No, obviously not. Well, what was it he believed then? What does Genesis 15:5 say he believed? Yes, it says, 'so shall your seed be'.

In other words, in chapter 15, Abraham has a word with God and says, 'What will you give me, seeing I go childless? And he that shall be possessor of my house is Eliezer of Damascus' (his steward). And Abraham said, 'Behold, to me you have given no seed, and no one born in my house is my heir. What's the good of you promising me all this great inheritance and everything else when I'm very old and I've got no son?' (see vv. 1-3). And God's reply to that was:

And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 'This man shall not be your heir; but he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be your heir.' And he brought him forth abroad, and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you are able to tell them.' And he said unto him, 'So shall your seed be.' (vv. 4-5)

What Abraham believed God about was that God was going to give him a son. If we are going to take this as history, we must take it literally at this point; and that was the promise. Of course, it wasn't that God came to him and said, 'Jesus has died for your sin.' God couldn't have said it, not then. The promise was that he was going to have a son, and Abraham believed God.

But you say, 'What is the good of your citing Abraham to me as a precedent then? God's not promising me a son, is he? How is this case parallel to mine?'



Well now, that's a point, isn't it? If you are going to say that Abraham was justified by faith because 'he believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness', how is his case similar to ours, so that we can pattern ourselves on it? Well now, Paul is asking us to think of the analogy between Abraham's faith and ours and how, at base and at heart, they represent the same thing. For he goes on to show in chapter 4 that God made this promise to Abraham that he was going to give him a son, but Abraham was already old, and Sarah was barren.

It is a delightful little story in Genesis 16 you know. It tells us how Sarah one day came to Abraham. She said, 'Abraham, dear.'

'What, my love?'

'I've been thinking.'

'Have you really, Sarah? Good. What were you thinking, my dear?'

'Well,' she said, 'I was thinking about that promise that God made us.'

'Oh yes? You mean the promise that he's going to give us a son?'

'Yes.'

'And what have you been thinking, my love?'

'Well, I've been thinking this. When God said, "I'm going to give you a son", he didn't just mean he's going to give us a son like that, Abraham. I know you believe God but, you see, God helps those that help themselves. And what he meant was that we've got to do our part and use our resources, and then he will bless our efforts.'

'Oh, is that how it is?' said Abraham. 'I'd never thought of that before. But we don't have any resources, Sarah my dear. I mean, not to put too fine point on it, but you're barren, my dear, aren't you?'

'Yes,' she said, 'but we have some resources. You could take Hagar and father a child by her.'

'Well, if you say so,' said Abraham. 'If that's what God means, we have to do our best to fulfil his promise.'

And so Ishmael was born, and Abraham rather liked him.

God said, 'Sorry Abraham. No.'

'Oh please,' said Abraham, 'let him be the one that you promised.'

'No,' God said, 'not him. You see Abraham, when I said I was going to give you a son, I meant I was going to give you a son, not by your contrivance.'

And so now God left Abraham until he was virtually dead. As far as fathering any child was concerned, he was decrepit. Romans 4:19 says, 'Abraham . . .'; now, please notice the Authorized Version has just followed a mistaken manuscript on the point—that Abraham '*did not* consider his body'. That's nonsense. He did consider it, of course he did. The true reading of the manuscript is: 'Abraham considered his body, now as good as dead'. It was quite impossible for him. Sarah was barren anyway, but now he was as good as dead. He was alive enough to father Ishmael, but now he was not; he was virtually dead. If now he was going to have a son, it must be that God would intervene and bring a son out of a virtually dead body. That is what faith meant. And Abraham was required to go on those years believing against hope, so to speak. In spite of the apparent growing impossibility, he believed in a God that could bring life out of death. That is faith. That is faith in God—helpless dependence on God that God would work.

How is that faith analogous to ours? If we are going to be justified by faith then we have got to show that same kind of faith. And Paul points out what the analogy is.

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was reckoned unto him [for righteousness]; but for our sake also, unto whom it shall be reckoned, who believe on him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification. (Rom 4:23–25)

So, how is that parallel? How is that analogous? How is that like Abraham's faith? Well, our faith for justification depends, not only on the death of Christ but on his resurrection, because if he's dead there is no salvation anyway. It is absolutely vital for us that Christ should rise from the dead.

Now, let me ask you. What do you contribute to Christ rising from the dead? Anything in particular? Let me use a crude illustration. Suppose you and I were living in the time of the apostles, and Christ had been buried and is in the tomb. So, this is the first day after he was buried, and we are all standing round the tomb, and we know in our hearts that unless he rises again from the dead, we should never be saved. We remember the words of the Lord Jesus that he is going to Jerusalem to be crucified and rise from the dead.

Unless he rises from the dead, we cannot be saved, so we stand around the grave and we say, 'Well, now look. We're required to believe. I'll tell you what, we've got to really believe, you see? Not just believe but we've *really* got to believe, and believe the proper way with a real volume of belief' (however you measure belief, on the Richter scale or something). 'We've got to believe the right way round, so let's all stand around the grave and join hands and say, "We believe! We believe! We believe! We believe!" And as we believe, God will raise Christ from the dead, by our faith.'

Well, you will laugh at that, but be serious for a minute. There are many people that look upon faith like that: 'Salvation is by faith, but now you have to believe the right way.' I am not betraying secrets when I tell you that, over the years I have had more than one person come to me in great distress as a believer. They are wondering: 'Am I saved at all?' And they know it's by faith. They've heard the preachers say, 'The devils believe, and that doesn't do them any good.'

'When I believed, was it the right kind of faith?' And they turn around and say, 'Was I looking to Jesus alone when I believed? I can't remember. So, I mightn't be saved!' One man said, 'I've not been saved all these years. Now I shall have to go to the elders and tell them I've not been saved, so I have to be baptized all over again.'

Oh, the anxiety caused. One man said, 'I get down on my knees, and I say that now this time I'm going to believe the right way round—my faith only in God. Then I feel better, but then the next day doubt comes in: Did I believe the right way?'

Unconsciously, they are turning faith into a work that merits the salvation. So, they think you have to just not believe, you have to believe with the right strength and in the right way and with the right power in order to qualify. But we have heard Paul saying that faith is not a work in that sense; it is the very opposite. Our faith did not cause Jesus to rise from the dead. He rose from the dead because of what God did. If God didn't do it, we are not saved. There is nothing you can do about it; you had better start trusting God, that God did it and brought

life out of death. Oh, there is evidence galore that God did do it and that Jesus is risen, but you see the point about faith, don't you?

Our faith, in that sense, is like Abraham's faith, that we don't make any contribution to this. It is God that did it. 'Christ was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification' (see vv. 24–25).

So, what we have been doing is to look at this doctrine of justification by faith, and we have tried to follow the arguments through: the statement of the case; the Old Testament authority for it; and then the question of what is meant by faith. What I want to do now is briefly to consider with you the effects, the results, of our justification by faith. Romans 5:1–11 states the wonderful blessings that we enjoy through justification by faith. It is a well-known passage of Scripture, and therefore we shall not spend too much time on it, important though it is.

## Since we have been justified by faith

### Peace with God

First: 'we have peace with God' (5:1). It has often been noticed, and it is worth repeating, that it is not 'peace with ourselves'; it is 'peace with God', because he has justified us, given us forgiveness and declared us to be just in his sight. His wrath has been satisfied by the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, 'we have peace with God'.

### Access by faith

Secondly: 'we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand' (v. 2). The old theologians used to talk about our *standing* before God and our *state*, and emphasized that these are two different things. It seems to me it is worth maintaining those two categories in our thinking. Our *state* is our progress, our present enjoyment or otherwise of the grace of God. That is one thing, but we should not confuse our enjoyment, our present condition, with our *standing* before God. Our standing before God depends on our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through him that we 'have had' (notice the tense) we '*have had* our access'. Now we are in, so to speak. He is the one through whom we got in, through whom we have our access, 'into this grace wherein we stand' (v. 2).

### Our standing in grace

And it is *grace* in which we stand. And as Paul has expounded it, it is in that sense *unconditional* grace. You might remember the description given in Revelation 7 when the multitude are found coming before God crying, 'Salvation to our God' (v. 10), and an elder asked John, 'Who are these?' And John is told who they are. They come out of the great tribulation, and they have their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before God. Therefore they are 'before the throne' (see vv. 13–17). It is interesting, because at the end of Revelation 6, when the heavens are parted and mankind sees the throne of God and of the Lamb, the unregenerate call upon the rocks to hide them from the face of him that sits upon the throne. These, then, that come in their multitude and stand before the throne of God, how do they

come? John is told that they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, 'therefore do they stand before God'. This is our standing, then, and it is a standing in grace, not by our merit.

### **Confident we shall attain the glory of God**

'And let us rejoice . . .' (Rom 5:2). Here comes the word; it is difficult to translate. *Rejoice*: joy, yes, but 'basic confidence', we put our 'boast' in this, our 'confidence' in this. 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God'. That is future. We are already justified; we have present standing; and we have a hope for the future, that is, that we shall attain the glory of God. It was said earlier that 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God' (3:23). Now, we are justified; we stand in grace; we have access to God. We are not yet glorified. We have a long way to go, but we can be absolutely certain that we shall attain the glory of God.

### **Confident in tribulations**

'And not only so, but we rejoice in tribulations' (v. 3), or 'we have confidence'. It is not rejoicing in the sense that, 'I'm happy, happy, happy all the day long', like the chorus says (I always sing it with a bad conscience, and sometimes I don't sing it, because that's not me). But it is 'rejoice' in that same sense; it is this basic confidence. We are prepared to face tribulation and be absolutely confident still. Why? 'Knowing . . .' a certain fact; not feeling, but '*knowing* that tribulation works endurance' (v. 3). That is important. God wants us to know it.

We talked about faith earlier on, but the parable of the Sower reminds us that the only faith that is worth talking about is the faith that endures.<sup>9</sup> It is a mark of true faith that it endures. The good seed are 'those that believe and bring forth fruit with endurance' (Luke 8:15). Therefore it is a matter of endurance, not 'patience' in the sense of the opposite of impatience, but *patience* in the older sense of the word that means: 'endurance, carrying on, stickability'. And if that is important, then it is not a question of saying, 'I once believed in 1904 when I put my hand up in a gospel meeting, and I believed and I was saved. Of course I don't believe now, but I'm nevertheless saved still.' True faith endures.

But what if tribulation shall come? What if tribulation should break my faith? That is a matter that Paul faces, and so does James, and so does Peter, because of the obvious importance of it. When tribulation comes, we can be confident in the face of tribulation, knowing that where there is faith to start with, tribulation works ('brings about', 'effects') endurance. Come summer wind or high weather, where there is faith, tribulation 'will work endurance'.

Just to show you that I'm not telling tales or making it up, listen to what James says in his epistle: 'Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into manifold temptations' (1:2). *Temptations* here means 'trials and testings'. So this sounds a very funny thing to say. What, count it all joy when you fall into various testings?

I used to work in a university for my living, as you know, and one of our duties was to invigilate examinations. It was a cruel sport. You had to come at the appropriate moment in

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<sup>9</sup> See Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8.

the morning, and there was the crowd waiting outside the examination hall. Some were rather too excited, laughing to brush off what was now going to happen. Others were sort of muttering and staring. You'd open the door and let them in, and they would find their place in the examination hall and sit down, and then turn the paper over to read the questions. Their faces were a picture! (What a cruel sport!) But for some, their very career depended on it. They didn't normally 'count it all joy' when they were faced with the examination. And if we are going to face testings that test whether we are believers or not, how can we count it all joy? James is saying the exact same as Paul. We are to 'count it all joy . . . *knowing* that the proof [the trying] of your faith works endurance' (v. 3). James says the same as Paul, and Peter speaks to the same effect, in the first chapter of his first Epistle (vv. 6–7).

#### *What endurance produces*

'And endurance works *approvedness*' (v. 3). The word means: 'endurance that will show that a person is genuine'. And genuineness becomes the source of hope. So now we have two hopes. We have the 'hope of the glory of God' (v. 2). We have it from the very first time we put our faith in Christ. We can be sure that one day we shall be conformed to the image of his Son. But now comes life and its experiences and its testings, and our faith is battered and sometimes it wobbles; but we are told that testings, for a believer, will work endurance. And when we come through the testings, we shall say, 'Yes, and I have proved it now by experience to be genuine.'

#### **The love of God poured out in our hearts (vv. 5–10)**

This hope, and hope in general, 'does not put us to shame; because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts' (v. 5). Notice what that means and what it does not mean. The love of God here does not mean our love for God, as though the Holy Spirit coming into our hearts helped us to love God. That may be true, but it isn't what Paul is saying here. As the context shows, it is God's love for us that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. That is a magnificent statement. It is the Holy Spirit's task, so to fill our hearts with a sense of the love of God that we have assurance and confidence, and we glory in the hope that lies before us.

He does shed abroad the love of God in our heart by a certain argument. It is not feeling, but logic.

For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: though perhaps for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commends his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (vv. 6–10)

Sin takes various forms in different people. We are all sinners. Some show the one symptom and some the other, to a greater degree. Here in verses 6–8, sin takes the form of 'weakness' and 'ungodliness', which means lack of respect: for God, for our fellow men and women and, in the end, a lack of respect for ourselves. The drunken man who goes wobbling up the street vomiting all over the pavement and behaving like a fool has lost all respect for

himself, hasn't he? And then it's worse. We are 'sinners', we come short. Worse still: we are 'enemies'.

The point of the Holy Spirit's argument is this. First of all, consider what is the greatest thing that God will ever do for you. I don't want to disappoint you, but whatever you expect God to give you when you get home to glory—a few galaxies to look after or to play with—I don't know what you're expecting, but the fact is, the biggest thing that God will ever do for any one of us, he has already done. He has given his Son for us. The question, therefore, is: when did he do that? Did he do it after we were somewhat improved, and only on the condition that we had improved? 'No,' says the Holy Spirit. Pray, do observe that it was 'while we were yet weak', while we were yet 'ungodly', while we were 'sinners', while we were 'enemies', that Christ died for us, and thus we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son.

If that is so, then the logic of the situation is this. God gave his Son to die for you when you were still a sinner. Do you think, now that you have been justified by his grace, he will give you up? If he did, it would suggest an inconsistency in the character of God, would it not? He loved you while you were sinners, loved you so much he gave his Son for you, but now that you have become justified, he might let you go? That wouldn't make logical sense, would it? While we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son. That is an extraordinary statement.

Remember the parable our Lord taught about the vineyard and the tenant farmers (Luke 20:9–19). The owner sent his various servants to get the fruit, and the tenants beat the servants and threw them out and sent them away without any fruit whatsoever. At last, the owner said, 'I have one son. I'll send my son. Surely they will reverence him' (see v. 13). And they murdered him. The fearful effect of sin is that we have taken the Son of the creator and owner of the universe and murdered him. If there was any moment when the wrath of God had been likely to descend upon us, it must have been then. This is the amazing story: it was *by that death*—organized by the evil and rebellion of the human heart, but foreordained of God for our salvation and the means of our reconciliation. And you perceive the wisdom of God's tactics. When people murdered his Son because of their twisted notion of what God is like, and their feeling that God was their enemy to be repulsed at all costs, by the death of that Son, God has shown us what God is like. How would you manage to resist and be hostile to a God that, when you were still an enemy, gave his Son for you?

It is a powerful argument. It is the Holy Spirit's argument. Notice it depends on logic, and on the character of God, and that God is not inconsistent. 'God *commends* his love towards us' (v. 8). That is a vivid phrase. When I was a youth, unemployment was almost universal in England, and men of ability were unemployed for months on end. They would be offered a job by the Unemployment Exchange, as it was called, and they had to take it. If they didn't take it, they got no more benefit. So, they had to come round the door offering this, that and the other. I remember one fellow came, and he was trying to persuade my parents to become subscribers to a newspaper called 'The News Chronicle'. People didn't want The News Chronicle, and the householder would shut the door in his face: 'No, I don't need that.' And the man would put his foot in the door. He wanted the chance to explain how good this was! Oh, what a concept it is for God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, to have to come down

and recommend his love to us and put his foot in the door, so to speak, to gain a hearing and argue the case for his love and character! They are vivid terms, aren't they?

### **We rejoice in God (v. 11)**

The final result of our being justified as given here (there is more to be said later on) is:

And not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (v. 11)

That is, we are not merely saved, not merely justified. Do perceive that this justification by faith, and what it involves, has changed our attitude to God himself. Now, it is not joy and rejoicing merely in the sense of being glad and happy, but it is a matter of our basic confidence. In that sense, we *glory!* In what? In God, of course. We are glad that God is the God he is. My salvation depends on him being the God he is; and my confidence is in him.

Genesis 1, 2 and 3 tell us where mankind went astray. It was not that Adam began an unhappy habit of bashing his wife every day before breakfast. Things went awry, fundamentally went awry, when Adam and Eve were induced by the serpent not to believe God and his word. 'Has God said . . .? Ah, don't take any notice of that', said Satan (see 3:1). That is a fundamental thing in the universe. You couldn't live in a house with somebody you didn't trust. That would be very difficult. You'll not live with God in his heaven if you don't trust him. That would be frightful, for God still is omnipotent, you know. And if we would be right in the sight of God, it means that the fundamental thing must be put right—not our works, but our faith and confidence in God. That is redemption performed. Our faith is in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

## [An Overview of Section Two](#)

### *The Wreckage of Adam's Sin—Part One*

#### **A survey of the contents**

I want to talk now about the second major part of the Epistle to the Romans. First of all, let's do a survey of the contents, just for a moment. By now you will have got used to my contention that there are four major parts to the Epistle to the Romans.

<b>1. 1:1–5:11</b>	<b>2. 5:12–8:39</b>	<b>3. 9:1–11:36</b>	<b>4. 12:1–16:27</b>
WRATH OF GOD	WRECKAGE OF ADAM'S SIN	FAILURE OF ISRAEL'S FAITH AND SERVICE	APPEAL FOR OUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE
Righteousness apart from the law	Righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in us	Christ is the end of the law for righteousness	Love is the fulfilment of the law
Christ died for us	We died with Christ	Jew/Gentile relations	Jew/Gentile relations
WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD	SAVED IN HOPE	ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED	NOW IS OUR SALVATION NEARER
Hope of the glory of God	Them he also glorified . . . creation delivered	'Life from the dead'	'The day is at hand', 'Satan bruised'
THE LOVE OF GOD (5:5– 11)	THE LOVE OF GOD (8:35–39)	THE WISDOM OF GOD (11:33–36)	THE ONLY WISE GOD (16:27)

We have surveyed, in superficial fashion, the first part that told us why we needed to be saved—because of the wrath of God against our sin. We have studied God's way of salvation—justification by faith. And we have noticed that that whole section, the whole first part of Romans, comes to its glorious conclusion with the triumphal statement: 'We shall be saved from the wrath of God through him' (5:9), and we have 'hope of the glory of God' (v. 2). And that triumphal statement is given in the context of an exposition of the love of God.



Now we are to move into the second major part of Romans, and I have suggested to you that this gives us a second reason why we need to be saved. This time, it is not the wrath of God, but the wreckage caused by Adam's sin. If you say, 'Where do you get that from?' I get it from 5:12 onwards:

As by one man's disobedience, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all, for that all have sinned. (see v. 12)

We see the consequences of Adam's one act of disobedience and the wreckage brought upon the human race by that initial disobedience. That too is going to end up with a tremendous statement of salvation. We are 'saved in hope' (see 8:24). It will then come to its conclusion with a marvellous statement of the love of God: 'Who shall separate us from the love of God?' (see 8:25–39).

Having noticed that, let us notice at once some superficial differences. In the first part of the epistle that we have just studied, we are told of a righteousness of God that is apart from the works of the law. We are justified by faith, not by the works of the law; the law cannot justify us. It is said many times over. Notice the difference in this second part of Romans. Now that we are righteous apart from the law this is going to tell us of God's purpose in our salvation, namely: 'that the righteous requirement of the law shall be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (v. 4).

Notice that both these sections are going to talk to us at great length about the death of Christ. The first section tells us that *Christ died for us*, and it stresses the propitiation that he thereby effected by dying for us. But then this second major part will not only tell us that Christ died for us, it will inform us that *we died with Christ* and were buried with him and raised with him. So both parts are going to talk about the death of Christ, but now you notice the difference, don't you?

Noticing the difference is a very important part in getting the exposition of Scripture right. When two passages have very similar ideas, then it is important to ask, 'What is the difference between them?' So, in the first one, Christ died for us, but in the second one, we died with Christ. So, in the first, 'we rejoice in hope of the *glory* of God'. In the second part, 'those he justified, them also he *glorified*'. What that glory will be is then spelled out— 'conformed to the image of his Son', and so forth and so on. It is that second section of Romans that we now begin to think about.

## A comparison of sections one and two

Let us go a little bit more deeply. Here is a survey of the contents; and notice how the contents differ.

<b>Section 1</b> 1:1–5:11	<b>Section 2</b> 5:12–8:39
<b>1. The diagnosis</b> All personally guilty: ‘without excuse’; ‘every mouth silenced’.	<b>1. The diagnosis</b> Not altogether our fault: ‘through one man’s one act of disobedience, the many constituted sinners’.
<b>2. The death of Christ</b> Christ died for us, while we were still sinners, ungodly, enemies.	<b>2. The death of Christ</b> We died, were crucified with Christ, buried, raised with him. How shall we continue in sin?
<b>3. The law in relation to righteousness and inheritance</b>	<b>3. The law in relation to sanctification</b>
<b>4. The implications of justification by faith</b>  The Holy Spirit pours out the love of God in our hearts to make real to us our hope of glory.	<b>4. The implications of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus</b>  The Holy Spirit gives life, guides, leads, intercedes for us, in the furtherance of God’s purposes for our glorification, and so strengthens our hope.
WRATH OF GOD. Righteousness apart from the law.  Christ died for us.	WRECKAGE OF ADAM’S SIN Righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in us.  We died with Christ.
WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD. Hope of the glory of God.	SAVED IN HOPE. Them also he glorified . . . creation delivered.
THE LOVE OF GOD (5:5–11).	THE LOVE OF GOD (8:35–39).

### 1. The diagnosis

First of all, in part one, we have the diagnosis. What is wrong with us? Why do we need to be saved? Well, because all are personally guilty; all are ‘without excuse’ (1:20); ‘every mouth . . . shut’ (3:19). We deserve God’s judgment. Why? Because we have sinned and sinned against the light that God has given us, whether that light is his law written on our hearts, whether it is the light of creation, or whether it is God’s revealed law in the Bible—in the Ten Commandments and so forth. We have sinned against the evidence that God has given us. We have sinned, knowing it was wrong. We are personally guilty and without excuse. It is our fault.

Notice the diagnosis in part two of Romans. That asks the deeper question. Certainly we have done these sinful things, but how did we become sinners to start with? Here, the answer is: it is not our fault that we were born sinners. And when I say that, I am aware that there are serious theologians who love the Lord, better than I do, probably, who would hold it is our fault, because when Adam sinned we sinned, and we are guilty of Adam's sin; so it is our fault. For the moment, I want to say what I personally believe, and then you may argue the case with me, if not today then in our next sessions. But I refer for the moment to Romans 5:19.

As through the one man's disobedience the many were constituted sinners . . .

It is not our fault we were born sinners. It was by one man's disobedience that the many were constituted sinners. This is the Christian doctrine of the fall. Adam was not born in sin, but he disobeyed God, and as the founder and first member of the human race from whom all others have come, the human race was in that sense perverted in Adam; and all who have been born since have been born sinners. By his one act of disobedience all have been constituted sinners. It is not our fault, therefore. The doctrine of the fall is, in one sense a very glad (I almost said 'happy') doctrine. People who say, 'I don't see why I should be condemned because of what Adam did,' can be answered with the assurance that nobody will ever be condemned because of what Adam did. People will be condemned for what they've done themselves, but not for what Adam did. We shall not be condemned because we were born sinners—that wasn't our fault; we shall be condemned for rejecting salvation. And salvation is on these terms, as that verse expresses it:

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were constituted [were made] sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous. (5:19)

If we were born sinners by what somebody else did, we can be made righteous by what somebody else did. God's ways are fair, aren't they?

This is a very merciful doctrine. Men are guilty. We all are guilty, and to that extent it is our fault. But have compassion on people. They were born sinners, you know. It wasn't their fault they were born sinners. They didn't ask to be born and to be born of a fallen race. In that sense, it is not their fault they were born sinners. God's ways being just, and more than just, if they were born sinners by what somebody else did, namely Adam, they can be saved by what somebody else did. 'By the obedience of the one, the many shall be constituted righteous.'

Now, we have to be careful, do we not, in applying these things? Notice that in the diagnosis of sin that we find in this epistle's explanation of the gospel, first comes the point that we are responsible before God. We deserve his wrath. We are guilty sinners.

Modern psychology has often influenced the courts in Britain. Somebody is brought before the court, and he's done some horrible deed, but then it is pleaded on his behalf: 'Well, look at his poor childhood, and look at these other factors, and he couldn't really help it,' and so on and so forth, and so he's let off. Oh, but wait a minute, if the judge knows his business, he will ask, 'When the man actually did what he did, did he know it was wrong?' A little child could have put a pencil through your eye and blinded you, but the little child wouldn't know

what it was doing. The question with an adult is: did they know they were doing wrong when they did it? And if they did, it is their fault, and they are guilty in that they have done something knowing it to be wrong. That is the force of the first major section of Romans: it is our fault.

Oh but when the man who did some outrageous deed has been sentenced and has gone to his prison or whatever the penalty is, then do have compassion on him, because the other thing is true: he was born a sinner. It was not his fault he was born a sinner, and he probably has all sorts of unfortunate things that happened to him in early childhood—he was beaten up by his parents and things of that order. Have compassion on him. And this is the gospel for him: he is ruined because of Adam's sin, and of course his own sinning, but he can be put right. He can be saved, not by what he does himself, but by what Christ has done. That is beautiful, isn't it? That is both sides of salvation.

## **2. The death of Christ**

Notice the significantly different phraseology. The first part of Romans says that Christ died for us while we were still sinners, ungodly, enemies and weak. He died for us. The second part is going to tell us of the death of Christ as well. But here it says that we died. We were crucified with Christ, buried and raised with him. How then shall we continue in sin? That is the other side of the story.

## **3. The law in relation to righteousness and inheritance and sanctification**

Then, as we know full well, the first part of Romans discusses the law in relation to righteousness and inheritance. It says that justification is apart from the works of the law, and the inheritance is not given to us on the ground that we have kept the law; it is apart from the works of the law that we are justified. It is by the grace of God and being in Christ that we inherit the inheritance; it is not by keeping the law. So, we are told there of the law in relation to righteousness (justification if you like) and inheritance.

Now, in this second part of Romans, chapter 7 raises the question of the relation of the law to our sanctification. The law could not produce our justification. Now we are going to be talked to about our sanctification—the process of becoming holy. What is the relation of the law to the process of sanctification? That is a very important topic, isn't it? That is the topic that has Paul confessing: 'Oh wretched man that I am, the good thing that I would do I don't do, and the bad thing I don't want to do, that I go and do. What a stupid fool I am,' and confessing that just as the law as law could not justify anybody, so the law as law cannot sanctify anybody (see 7:15–24). That is a very important thing to get hold of, but notice the difference between the two parts of Romans.

## **4. The implications of justification by faith and the spirit of life in Christ Jesus**

Then notice what is said about the Holy Spirit. In the first part, as we saw, the Holy Spirit pours out the love of God in our hearts to make real to us our hope of glory. This is the role of the Holy Spirit when it comes to the question of justification by faith. But in the second part of Romans, the role of the Holy Spirit, the implications of 'the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' are

spelled out in chapter 8 at great length. Here it is the Holy Spirit that gives us life, who guides us, who leads us, who intercedes for us in the furtherance of God's purposes for our glorification, and so strengthens our hope.

These are all parallel messages, then, but we do well to notice the differences between them.

## **A summary of the main arguments in section two**

Here I set out briefly the main stages in the argument of this second part of Romans. It is good to get a hold of the drift and the contents of the main arguments before we come down to the detail, and how those main arguments fit together, why they come in the order that they do, and what each of the main arguments contributes to the meaning of the whole.

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|----|-----------------|--|
| 1. | Romans 5:12–21  | The root of our ruin and of our recovery.  |
| 2. | Romans 6:1–14   | The legal basis of sanctification: 'he who has died has been justified from sin'.                  |
| 3. | Romans 6:15–7:6 | No penalty, but consequences, wages and fruit.   |
| 4. | Romans 7:7–25   | The law's inability to sanctify: its true function in the process of sanctification.               |
| 5. | Romans 8:1–39   | The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the secret of sanctification, and its implications. |
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### **1. The root of our ruin and of our recovery (5:12–21)**

So, first comes the paragraph that tells us of the root of our ruin and our hope of recovery. We read of the one man, Adam, through whose disobedience the many were constituted sinners. The secret of our recovery is by the obedience of the one, that is, Jesus Christ. Through him the many shall be constituted righteous.

### **2. The legal basis of our sanctification (6:1–14)**

Second, if this is going to be about our sanctification, that is, how we can be made holy and how eventually the righteous requirement of the law is going to be fulfilled in us 'who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit' (8:4), then it is exceedingly important to notice that the next big argument tells us about the legal basis of our sanctification.

You say, 'What do you mean by the legal basis of our sanctification? We know quite well about the legal basis of our *justification*. We were guilty sinners who deserved the penalty of our sins from the wrath of God, but Christ died for us. He offered the propitiatory sacrifice; that is the legal basis of our justification.'

It is not always apparent to believers that there has to be a legal basis of the process of our sanctification. But there has to be, of course, and to establish it, I appeal now to Romans 6:14—'For sin shall not have dominion over you.'

Why not, and how not?

Once, many, many years ago, I was conducting a Bible study for some of my younger brothers and sisters who had asked for it (it wasn't my fault; they'd asked for it). They wanted

to study Romans and in particular this part of Romans. So, I set them a little study to get on with, and I went away and left them for a while, and I said, 'Here it says in Romans 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." I'd like you to study that phrase and tell me, when I come back, what is the reason why sin shall not have dominion over you. What is the secret of breaking the dominion of sin? How is it to be explained? How, and on what grounds, are we delivered from the dominion of sin?'

Having set the question, I went away, and came back after a suitable length of time to hear their answers. 'Now, what is the secret that sin shall not have dominion over us?'

'Oh,' they said, 'yes, we've found it in chapter 8! It's because the Holy Spirit has set us free from the law of sin and death! It's the Holy Spirit within that gives us victory over sin!'

I said, 'That's glorious. That isn't what the verse says.'

'Oh, yes, but it is so anyway. I mean, it is the Holy Spirit that gives us victory over sin.'

I said, 'Well, yes, but that isn't what the verse says, is it?'

'What do you mean, it isn't what the verse says?'

'Well, I mean the verse I asked you to study: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under law, but under grace." That is what I meant by asking what the reason is, and how it is, that sin shall not have dominion over you. Here is the reason: that 'you are not under law, but under grace.'

And they said, 'Oh, I don't see the point of that. That's no reason at all!'

It happens to be holy Scripture.

Yes, that verse is giving us the legal basis of our sanctification; so is chapter 6, from the start down to that point.

So, what do I mean by the legal basis for sanctification? Well, I don't know what you propose, or what you proposed to God, the day or moment that you were justified by faith. Perhaps you can remember it, can you? You saw clearly that now that you were justified, you wanted to live a holy life, yes? Did you undertake to be holy—absolutely, completely holy and sinless from that point onward? I don't think you did, did you? You told the Lord you wanted to follow him and you wanted to live to please him. Now you have lived since that moment about thirty-five or forty years or whatever it is you've lived since that moment. How has it gone? Are you perfect yet? I think not, perhaps. And you still do some sins? Tell me, does it matter that you still sin? Or, now that you have trusted the Saviour, does God say, 'Well, never mind. You're on my side now, aren't you, so I don't mind if you sin. It's these others that aren't on my side: I'll crack down on them, but now that you are on my side, that doesn't matter if you sin?'

Well, of course not! Sin is still as serious as ever it was, but the process of our being sanctified and made holy is going to be a lifelong process, and if you get to the age of ninety-nine, having made much progress by God's grace in the life of holiness, you would still confess, if you were asked: 'But I haven't yet attained. I still come short', wouldn't you? And God is a realist. Having undertaken to launch us on the pathway of sanctification, God knows that it is going to take a lot of time, and that we shall stumble and fall. Therefore he has to put this business and process of our sanctification on a sound legal footing.

In the far off days when I went to school, there were some masters who undertook to teach us chemistry. It was a very risky business teaching some of us chemistry! The danger was we

might blow the laboratory to bits by mixing up the wrong kind of stuff. And because of that danger in the process, parents had to pay a certain fee in advance to cover all the expenses in case their darling little children blew up the chemistry lab and ruined it! They had to pay in advance.

When God undertook to make you holy, knowing the process would be long, knowing what you are and how often you would come short, he paid in advance the expenses of your education in holiness. That is a magnificent thing.

Once we get involved in wanting to be holy, I can guarantee this: we shall become more conscious of sin than we were before. I amuse myself by playing the piano when other people are not about (well, that's a dignified word to use for what I do). But when somebody who's a bit more expert than I am comes and plays, I shrink into the corner and don't admit I ever attempt to play the piano. And the nearer you come to Christ, the more unholy you will feel. The more you want to be sanctified, the more God will have to teach you the seriousness of sin. And as we progress, the Holy Spirit will show us eventually that certain attitudes of ours that we thought were jolly good were, in fact, sinful, though we didn't know it. It will in some sense be, on our part, a discovery of our sinfulness, because if we are going to be made holy, we shall have to face our sinfulness and repent of it and seek the deliverance of God and his Holy Spirit. And the question of our sinning, as believers, had to be paid for before the law of God, in advance; and it has been.

The reason why 'sin shall not have dominion over us' is given to us here in chapter 6. It doesn't say here: 'Because the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus will set you free.' That is true, but it is not said until chapter 8. Here it is said, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you: because you are not under law, but under grace.' Notice the phrase, 'because you are not under *law*' as such. It doesn't say 'not under *the law*', but 'not under *law* [as such], but under grace.'

Just consider me for a moment. I want to be holy, and suppose I wake up one Monday morning, and there is the law standing beside my bed and saying, 'Gooding, get up. You shall not be lazy; get up! And from now on today, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. And if you fail, I shall curse you.'

What would you do if you were me? I don't know about you. I think you'd get up and have a go. I shouldn't! I should say, 'Well, if those are your terms, and I have got to love the Lord like that, well, I mean, I confess I want to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, but I know from past experience that I shan't do it perfectly today! And if when I fall short you're going to curse me, well I might as well stay here.'

And what would the law say? 'Well, then, I curse you for staying in bed.'

God hasn't let down his standards, but God is a realist; and our process of sanctification says this: that 'sin shall not have dominion over you; it shall not keep you down'. Why not? 'Because you are not under law.'

If, as a believer, I were under law as such, as a principle, then the first time I sinned, I'd be out. You see, the law isn't just advice that says: 'I would do this if I were you. It would be better for you, and it's a better way of living, actually. You know, this is a good way to live; so live like that.' The law isn't that. The law is command plus penalty if you break the command. The law—law as such—is a prohibition. It says, 'You shall not do this.' And if you break the prohibition, law, as such, curses you and demands a penalty. That is law. And if we

were under law, the first time we transgressed, the first time we sinned as believers, that would be it, finished.

The secret is we are not under law, and therefore sin shall not keep us down in that sense, because when we sin, we can (oh, thank God for it!) confess our sin, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from our sin. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9); and we are free to get up and have another go.

### **The other themes in section two**

We will stop at that point, but when we return for a later session, we shall consider the other major arguments in this section, which are as follows:

*3. No penalty, but consequences, wages and fruit (6:15–7:6).*

*4. The law's inability to sanctify: its true function in the process of sanctification (7:7–25).*

*5. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the secret of sanctification: and its implications (8:1–39).*



## Questions and Answers Session Two

### *Questions from Section One*

This session can last as long or short as you please. The matter is in your hands. I have some questions from a fortnight ago that I promised to answer, and I will do that now to the best of my ability, and then proceed to answer the other questions which you have handed in just now.

#### **Question one**

*How does social conditioning affect the law written on every heart?*

DWG: It is a very valid, practical question. I was making the point made by Paul in Romans 2 that when pagans do by nature the things that are written in God's revealed law (revealed on Mount Sinai and in what follows), they show that they have a law written on their hearts; meaning that though they do not have the special revelation of the word of God, of the Bible, and the Old Testament in particular, yet there is a law written on their hearts (see vv. 14–15). And I was suggesting that there is evidence of this universally.

There are certain things that man qua man—human beings—know, whether they admit it or not. One is that there is a God, a creator. You will find it everywhere through the world. Hindus believe that behind everything is what they call 'The One'. Aristotle, the Greek, believed it. Buddhists believe it. They have some funny notions of what 'the one' is like, that's true to say, but yes, they do believe there is 'the one'. Missionaries from Africa report that many tribes likewise, while they don't worship 'the one', the supreme God, they know of his existence. They worship the demons, ancestors and all sorts of things, but if pressed will confess that they know about 'the one', though they don't worship him. And some of them will say, 'But he went away because he was displeased with us.'

So, yes, there is a knowledge of the Creator, an awareness of the Creator, inbuilt into the human heart. And in addition, people know certain things. They know it is not right to speak lightly of God—to blaspheme him, though they carry on and do it of course, and that's why they think it's funny at times. Laughing and joking can be an expression of your inner awareness that you have transgressed some boundary. That is why blasphemy (increasingly so on BBC Radio 4) is greeted with howls of laughter. It wouldn't be a joke, would it, if it weren't forbidden?

Then we are aware that it is not right to kill innocent life. There isn't a tribe on earth that says it's okay for a man to steal another man's wife without his permission. There is a universal law that it is wrong to tell a lie in order to get somebody else into trouble, or

condemned in court. And the man who would do it himself would be highly indignant if he were accused in court and somebody told a lie and got him condemned. He would be very angry about that. They show in their hearts that they know it is wrong to lie, particularly to get somebody else into trouble. 'You shall not bear false witness' (Exod 20:16). And there are other things like it. There are things written on the heart.

That is not the same as conscience. Conscience is the mechanism that can then warn us if we are about to do one of these forbidden things. And if we do those things, conscience makes us aware that we've done them and gives us what we call 'a guilty conscience.' The law is not written on the conscience; the law is written on the heart. The conscience is the warning system inside us.

Now this question says, 'How does social conditioning affect the law written on every heart?' Well it depends who does the social conditioning, of course. In Israel, there were a lot of further laws brought in from time to time by God to work out the details. There were these basic principles; now, how do they work out in detail? So you shall not take innocent life; yes, but what about this situation? A man builds a house with a flat roof, and somebody goes upstairs, and he falls over the other side. Is it the owner's fault? 'Well, wait a minute,' says the law. 'He should have put a parapet around it, so that people wouldn't fall over easily; and if he doesn't then he's guilty' (see Deut 22:8). This is a particular application.

You shall not harm your neighbour. That is perfectly true. You shan't do anything that would be likely to harm your neighbour. Yes, we see there's a point in that too. Driving a car at excess speed would harm my neighbour because it could be dangerous driving. How would I know when I've reached the point of dangerous driving? Well, the government says, 'We're going to pass law for that.' Now, here is social conditioning for you. 'We'll say beyond 30 mph in a built-up area is the point at which you would be driving dangerously.' In other countries it's a different number, but never mind; this is a law brought in from the basic principle. So, one: 'You shall not harm your neighbour'. Two: 'You shall not do anything that is liable to harm your neighbour.' And three: 'You shall have a regulation to point it out at what point we think it would become liable to harm your neighbour if you weren't careful.'

So social conditioning can be a method of working out the implications in daily, practical life of that deep, written law. But social conditioning can be otherwise. 'You shall not kill your neighbour,' says the Old Testament. 'You shall not kill an innocent man.' In some places they not only kill them, they cook them and eat them. And in their social conditioning it is thought it is right to do it, though I am told they go through all sorts of funny rituals when they do it because deep down in them there is a conscience that this could be wrong. But social conditioning says it's okay to eat your enemy. That is social conditioning going plain straight in denial of the law written upon the heart. And when modern theorists say that all values, all ethics, are socially conditioned and there are no absolute values, they are denying what we all know in our hearts, actually. And if you doubt it, you might want to steal £10,000 from them and see what they say? 'Hey, you, I shall prosecute you!'

'Oh no, you see there are no absolute values. In my social conditioning it's okay to steal from you.'

They don't act it out; they don't live by it.

## Question two

*When talking about relativism, you said that some say there is no such thing as absolute truth. And then asked if that statement is itself an absolute truth. Is this a grammatical ruse not touching ethical relations and relativism? I have heard atheists say so.*

DWG: Well, you have heard correctly: they do say so. My argument (it's not just mine) is this. If somebody says, 'There is no such thing as absolute truth', what he is saying is a statement of universality, is it not? 'There is no such thing as absolute truth, nothing is absolutely true.' Well then, if he says that then he is making an absolute statement. You are right to then ask: 'That proposition that you have just enunciated — "There is no such thing as absolute truth" — is that true?'

And what is the point of pushing him to that? Well, because if he replies, 'Yes', now he is making a universal statement. He is saying there is one absolute truth, and that is that there is no absolute truth; and it is universally true throughout the universe — there is no such thing as absolute truth anywhere at all. Well, he is laying it down as an absolute truth that there is no such absolute truth in the universe. It is the 'self-referential fallacy' in logic.

Is this a grammatical ruse? No, it isn't a grammatical ruse; it is a logical fact; it is a logical principle. If the man said, 'There are very few absolute truths,' that would be one thing. But to say there are no such things as absolute truths is to state a universal, absolute statement, and therefore in so doing he does either of two things. Either he is saying, 'Yes, there is one absolute truth, namely: there are no absolute truths.' Or else he is saying, 'No, what I said wasn't true, and when I said there is no such thing as an absolute truth that isn't to be taken absolutely. I didn't mean there was no absolute truth anywhere.' Well, which way does he want it? It is not a grammatical ruse; it is a question of logic, of what he is trying to say.

## Question three

*How can Paul quote from Psalms and say things such as, 'There is none that seeks after God' (see Rom 3:11) when we know that some do? We have examples in Scripture, and even Cornelius in Acts.*

DWG: That was very perceptive of my questioner, because I laid some emphasis on the fact that God recognizes those that seek him, even though they are not yet Christians. And I quoted Cornelius who sought after God (Acts 10). You could quote Lydia, if you like, who Paul found at a prayer meeting in Philippi when he went there (Acts 16). She was at the hour of prayer. She was a pagan woman but a woman who sought God and joined with the Jewish women, perhaps, in Philippi. There weren't enough of them to make a synagogue, but they had a regular prayer meeting, and they sought for God. How do we reconcile that with the psalmist who is quoted by Paul, saying, 'There is none that seeks after God?'

The best explanation that I know of, the best way of understanding it is, of course, what is called by the theologians 'total depravity.' It can be a doubtful doctrine anyway, but it is not meant to infer that we are every bit totally corrupt but that no one part of us is perfect. So in the absolute sense there is none that seeks after God. If you want evidence of that, ask the most holy man or woman you know. There goes a believer, and you say that she is a holy woman. She seeks after God. And you ask her, 'My dear, good, lady, do you mind my asking

you? You strike me as very holy; you seek the Lord daily. Do you seek him with one hundred percent of your heart?' What do you suppose she would answer?

'Oh, I come far short of it. There's much selfishness still within me.' And so forth.

In the absolute sense, there is none that seeks after God one hundred percent as we ought to, and Paul is stating in Romans 3 the extreme, the absolute. Judged by God's law, we all come short. That doesn't mean that no one seeks God *at all*. And, rightly, you point out Cornelius and others who, to the best they know how, seek after God.

### Question four

*In our English Bibles, 'atonement' only occurs in Romans 5:11, but this does not seem to be the correct rendering. 'Atonement' therefore is not a New Testament term. In the Old Testament, is it correct to understand it as a temporary covering, whereas the fullness of the death and blood of Christ introduces us to total appeasement — propitiation. Is it then more correct to talk about 'the propitiation' rather than 'the atonement'?*

DWG: Well thank you for the question, and I understand the question because it is based on a problem that has been discussed by people for many years, decades, even centuries. The first problem arises because of our English and the word *atonement*. When this question says, 'atonement is not a New Testament term', well, it's very good to say that because the New Testament is written in Greek, of course, and the word 'atonement' is what some translators have used when translating certain words in the New Testament. 'By whom we have now received the atonement' says the Authorized Version in Romans 5:11. It is strictly correct to say, of course, that 'atonement' isn't a New Testament word in the sense that, being English, it doesn't occur in the Greek New Testament. The real point, however, is whether 'atonement' in English is a good word to use for any of the words that occur in the New Testament.

To start with in Romans 5:11, does anybody here have a version that reads, 'by whom we have received the atonement'? Some of you do, and I suspect that yours is an Authorized Version, a King James Version. Yes, the questioner is quite right to say that that is a mistranslation. Well, that is a bold statement, an exaggerated statement! The actual Greek means, 'through whom we have now received the *reconciliation*.' Does anybody else have 'reconciliation' in their translation? Several do. Yes, the Greek word is *katallagé* and means: 'reconciliation'.

Now, you can start a discussion as to what 'atonement' meant in the days when the translators of the King James Version used it. Some people have argued that in English atonement means 'at-one-ment' — 'at one mind', and means therefore that two parties have come to one mind and are thereby reconciled. Well, that's a handy way of illustrating it, but I'm not sure that the English word 'atone' by itself means simply 'at one'. But anyway, that kind of talk is beside the point. The question at issue is how we should translate the words in Greek like we found in Romans 3:25: 'Whom God has set forth to be . . .' now, whatever do you call it in English?

What do your versions say at Romans 3:25? 'Whom God has set forth . . .' what? You who have a King James Version, tell me. What does your version say? The 'propitiation'? Jolly

good. Propitiation is what it means, and *propitiate* is 'the appeasement of the wrath of God through the sacrifice of Christ'. It satisfies his holy indignation against sin.

This is not savage doctrine. God is angry; sin goes against his whole nature; it is a provocation to the holiness of God, and God feels indignation at sin. And when he pardons us sinners it is not because he says, 'I'm sorry, I got a bit overheated about that, you know. Really I shouldn't have felt so strongly about it.' That is nonsense! God's indignation against sin is just and holy and beautiful. It is not a question of him repenting of it; God doesn't repent of it. And it's not a question of God suppressing his indignation. That indignation had to have the satisfaction it demands, and that is done through the atonement.

Now, the second question here is about the use of the word 'atonement' in the Old Testament. On the day of atonement, in Leviticus 16, that is the ceremony for the day of . . . What does your translation call it? The day of what? In Hebrew it is *Yom Kippur*. The Jews still celebrate it to this day, in the wintertime.

Yes, it was a Sabbath of rest, but what did the high priest do when he went in? Yes, he made an 'atonement'. Is that what your English translation says? And in Leviticus 23:26–27 'And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying, "On the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of . . .". Yours says 'atonement'? Yes, so this is the Hebrew word we were thinking about this morning—*kippur* (or *kippurim*). Some people have said that that word in the Hebrew comes from a verb called *kaphar*, which means 'to cover'. And so they had the idea that the blood of the sacrifice in the Old Testament merely covered the guilt and sins of the people. Therefore the difference between that and Christ is that he really made *propitiation*, whereas in the Old Testament the blood of bulls and goats only *covered* their sins.

But that is a doubtful argument from this point of view. It is perfectly true that the Old Testament sacrifices did not 'put away' sins, for it is impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to do any such thing (see Heb 10:4). But it was a symbol, and it was called 'the blood of atonement'. 'You shall make atonement' through it—*kippur* (see Lev 6:7). And as we saw, when the Jews came to translate this phrase from the Old Testament and put it into Greek, they used the word *hilasterion* because they understood that what was happening there was a *propitiation*. It was only a symbol, of course. Those symbols could not satisfy God's indignation against sin. They were only a symbol, a kind of toy money, but they were a symbol of what Christ did. And what he did is referred to in that same word, as a *hilasterion*, in Romans 3:25. Now, he *did* appease the wrath of God.

I agree with you therefore that the sacrifices in the Old Testament were only a symbol. But God said it straight in Leviticus 17: 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make propitiation for your souls' (v. 11). It is the blood that makes propitiation. He gave it to them, not just to cover; it was the symbol of propitiation. So, I agree with you that the blood of bulls and goats did not put away sin; they did not appease the wrath of God. They were tokens in advance; they were symbols. It is the blood of Christ that really appeased God; yes, that is perfectly true. But the word that is used in the New Testament is used here in the Old in the Greek translation. And, to this very present day, the Jew celebrates the *Yom Kippur*—the day of propitiation.

## Question five

*In Romans 4:7, do we quote from Psalm 32: 'sins are covered'? Covered is more than the thought of atonement. Does this bring the thought of atonement into the New Testament?*

DWG: Romans 4:7 says, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.' Well, yes, but that is another way of speaking, isn't it? God says, 'I shall cast all your sins into the depths of the sea' (see Mic 7:19). That's a metaphor. Have you ever seen a bundle of sins? Have you seen what happens to them when they are put in water? I don't think you've actually seen that. It's metaphor, isn't it? We see where they are—all swallowed up and forgotten. So a sin being 'covered' is one way of saying that God has, to put it in another sense, 'blotted them out'. 'I'll blot out your transgressions' (see Isa 43:25). Or, your sins are 'covered'; that is, from the eyes of God.

Those metaphors denote a reality but, as you rightly say, it wasn't until Christ paid the actual price that the iniquity was finally put away. And you have on your side the argument in what the writer says in Hebrews 10 in the early verses. When the Old Testament saints offered their sacrifices according to the law, they had to keep on repeating them. And what does that show? It shows that their sacrifices never made them perfect as pertaining to the conscience. For if they had once been made perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, they would have ceased offering them.

The logic of that is simple. Suppose you and your wife have a mortgage with a building society, and it's a bit of a burden; every month it comes around and you've got to scrape the pennies together, and go without a new suit and all the rest, to pay the mortgage. And you've been doing this for thirty-five years and got in the habit of doing it every month. When you've made the monthly payment you feel good for the first week, and half way through the second week; and then you begin to think, 'I mustn't spend that, because I've got the mortgage . . .' and then the worry of it comes up again. When you have finally paid the last contribution to the mortgage, would you find yourself saying, when the next month came around: 'Oh my dear, I think, just to make sure, we'll go down to the building society and pay just a bit more. It will make us feel better'? You don't, do you? Once the whole lot is paid you don't carry on the process of paying! No, because your conscience is clear. The debt is paid; it's final and finished.

Under the law they brought their sacrifices, and they were told that they were forgiven (see Lev 5). When they sinned again they had to give another sacrifice. And so it went on. They were forgiven, but they never had a 'conscience made perfect' (see Heb 9:9; 10:1-2). For once they had realized that the whole of the debt of sin is paid then they wouldn't have offered any more sacrifices. The wonder of the sacrifice of Christ is that it pays the whole lot, and God gives us the guarantee: 'their sins and their iniquities, I'll never haul them up in court again' (see Heb 10:17). And because that is so, where such forgiveness like that is, says Hebrews 10, 'there is no more offering' (v. 18). That doesn't mean: 'You don't need another offering—something else in addition to Christ'; it means: 'There is no longer any process of offering. You don't have to offer anything to get the forgiveness of sins.' A believer doesn't have to keep on offering. To keep on offering is a grievous mistake. If you find somebody who keeps on offering anything at all (the supposed blood and body of Christ, for instance), and they

keep offering it on the altar to get forgiveness, the New Testament says, 'Well, you'll know that person doesn't yet have a conscience made perfect. Because if his conscience had been made perfect he would have stopped offering anything—body and blood of Christ, or anything whatsoever!' For when you have complete forgiveness, then there is no more process of offering. Christ doesn't keep offering. He is sat down (10:12).

So that, yes, in the Old Testament they were told they were forgiven. Leviticus 5 says so—'Bring this offering and you shall be forgiven' (see vv. 10; 13; 16; 18). But they didn't have a conscience made perfect. They had to repeat it for each individual sin, so to speak. The nation had to do it once a year—every year—and in those there was a legal *remembrance* of sins. It was not merely: 'I remember being rude to my grandmother'; it is the sin brought up before God. That is the solemnity for Jews to this very present day of the *Yom Kippur*. When their sins are confessed before almighty God it is a solemn occasion, and they have to fast and afflict their souls. They do it to this day; but next year they'll do it again. They never have a conscience made perfect. The wonder of the gospel is that through the salvation of Christ and his sacrifice we have a conscience made perfect. There is no need to offer anything anymore in order to get forgiveness of sin.

So, yes, if you like to think about the Old Testament as 'covering', that is to my mind a metaphor for the Jews, like 'casting them into the sea' or 'blotting out their transgressions' or whatever. For though that was a real forgiveness, in a real sense, and David can say the principles upon which it was given, they didn't yet have a conscience made perfect through the Lord. Now David knows, of course, because he's in glory. He is what the Bible calls, 'the spirit of a just man made perfect' (Heb 12:23).

## Question six

*Explain further please the phrase in Romans 5:10, 'We shall be saved by his life.'*

DWG: Well, I will do that, God willing, on our next occasion. It is in the result of our justification: 'We shall be saved from the wrath of God through him' (v. 9), that is, through his death; he died for us. But now, in addition, 'if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life' (v. 10). The contrast here is between the death on the one hand, and the life on the other. And therefore the contrast is deliberate.

The death of Christ must have caused God infinite pain. If we are reconciled to God by what caused him infinite pain (the death of his Son) how reasonable would it be now that Christ who died for our sins, is risen and alive, that God would turn against us? No, indeed not: 'we shall be saved by his life'.

And the question of salvation is, of course, a very big question. We are saved in the sense that we *have been* saved; we *have been* forgiven; we *have been* justified. By grace we *have been* saved. But there is more to salvation than the past—the 'we have been' part. There is the present. We are *being saved*, because he is an intercessor for us. 'He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them' (Heb 7:25). So he is our present Saviour, constantly is he our Saviour. And he shall be our Saviour, for we wait for the Saviour from heaven, who will transform this body of our

humiliation and fashion it like unto the body of his glory (see Phil 3:20–21). So we *shall be* saved. And the wrath of God is not only presently expressed on certain types of sin, but there will come the great 'day of wrath' (Rom 2:5). In the Bible, the day of God's wrath is future, of course, and believers shall be saved from it.

## Question seven

*What did Jesus mean when he said, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day' (John 8:56)?*

DWG: Well, it is marvellous to get an easy question, or at least, rather, a question that can be answered easily. The answer to that is, 'I don't know'. I can make all sorts of guesses. I would be interested to hear if you have found anything. Our Lord is saying, 'Your father, Abraham, rejoiced to see my day. He saw it and was glad.'

And they said, 'You are not fifty years old yet, and you talk of seeing Abraham?'

Well, that isn't what he said. He said, 'Abraham saw *me*. He rejoiced to see my day. He was glad to see my day'. And, 'before Abraham was, I am' (see John 8:39–59).

Our Lord is asserting that he is Jehovah and eternal—everlasting. What does he mean when he said, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day'? Well, who knows? Our Lord says so—will we believe it?

The New Testament, in Hebrews for instance, says that Abraham 'looked for the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God' (11:10). That is the great, eternal city. He knew of that, and he looked forward to it. I don't think it is beyond possibility that when he thought about the great promises made to him and his seed, and when he saw how the very covenant said that he and his seed would not inhabit the inheritance for the next four hundred years (Gen 15:13), he must therefore begin to think: 'Well, who is this seed that shall inherit?' It seems to me to be not beyond possibility that God gave him to understand, just like the promise to Eve that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen 3:15), that this referred to the Messiah who was eventually coming. And he looked forward to that.

It is said of Moses that he bore 'the reproach of *Christ*'—the Messiah (Heb 11:26).

You say, 'How is that possible?'

Well, Moses would have known, of course, of God's promise to Abraham that God would one day deliver the nation; there was this coming seed; and that the future therefore lay with Israel and not with Egypt. And he left Egypt because he had respect for 'the recompense of the reward' (v. 26) and took his place with Israel because he believed that, according to God's promise, the blessing of the whole earth depended on Abraham's seed—ultimately, of course, on Christ.

So I think John 8:56 may mean in general that Abraham likewise was given to understand that the seed would one day be the great 'seed of the woman', what we call the Messiah. He looked forward to that day, and by faith he saw it and was glad. He saw it as a reality that should be.



## Question eight

*Comment briefly on Genesis 12. Some people have said Abraham was declared righteous when he left Ur, citing that the Lord wouldn't use and bless an unregenerate man.*

DWG: Well, that's a nice deduction to make from Genesis 12; that God made a covenant with Abraham and wouldn't have blessed him if Abraham had still been an unregenerate man. It says in chapter 12 that he made him a promise, but I don't see that he made a covenant with him at that point. And when it comes to chapter 15 and God repeats the promise: 'I shall give you this land to inherit it', and Abraham says, 'Oh Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?' (see 15:7-8), God doesn't say, 'But I told you *before*, Abraham.' The way he will know it now is because God at this stage makes a covenant with him and with his seed.

Now, I'm not commenting and saying that Abraham wasn't a regenerate man. For Acts tells me that 'the God of glory' appeared to Abraham and said, 'Abraham, get out from this land and go into the land that I will show you' (7:2-3). The 'God of glory' appeared to him. Abraham was converted from living amongst old idolaters and being one himself. The God of glory appeared to him and brought him out. I'm not disputing that he was a believer, but I am pointing out the actual story of when he was justified. If you want to have it tied down legally, then you'll have to come to Genesis 15 when God made him the promise and he believed, and it was 'counted to him for righteousness'.

Secondly, then God says, 'I'm going to give you this inheritance.' He says, 'And how shall I know that?' And God made a covenant with him. That is the first time I read of God making a covenant with him.

Some people say that the covenant of chapter 17 is the same covenant, but that won't do. For Paul argues in Galatians 3 that once a covenant has been made it cannot subsequently be altered or added to. The law, therefore, that came four hundred years later cannot be added to that covenant as an extra condition (see v. 17). Well then, circumcision wasn't given until about thirteen or fourteen years later after that first covenant. Circumcision cannot be read legally as a condition laid down as an extra condition. If it wasn't in the covenant terms then nothing can be added later to those covenant terms as an extra condition.

That is my argument, but you won't take my word for it of course. You will go out and think about these things for yourselves.

## The Root of Our Ruin and of Our Recovery

### *The Wreckage of Adam's Sin—Part Two*

I propose to devote this and the next three sessions entirely to chapters 5:12–8:39. We began those chapters in our previous session, and I want to continue now in more detail. In the next group of sessions in a fortnight's time, God willing, I propose to discuss chapters 9, 10 and 11, and then to give a few broad comments on the final chapters of the book from chapter 12 onwards to the end. But today I concentrate again on what is the second part of Romans, and I do so for two reasons. We need to concentrate on it because it is an exceedingly practical part of the word of God, and particularly chapter 6. On the other hand, chapter 6 is notorious for all the many false and inaccurate interpretations of what it is saying. Therefore, I hope that we shall spend time patiently trying to understand what chapter 6 is saying, because it relates to the practical matters of our sanctification.

#### **Our studies so far**

I have suggested in the layout that the first two sections, or parts, of Romans deal with the two basic reasons why we need to be saved. The first reason that we need to be saved is because we stand under God's wrath as not only sinners but guilty sinners. Having proved that we are guilty, that all have had sufficient evidence and have sinned against the light of that evidence and therefore are guilty in view of that, chapters 3–5 then tell us about the great salvation God has. Those chapters tell us how we can be made right with God and justified apart from the law through the propitiation that is in Christ Jesus. When that section comes to its climax we see the result of that salvation is that 'we shall be saved from the wrath of God' (5:9). Therefore we have noticed the coherence of the argument in that part of Romans. We need to be saved because, in our sins, we are exposed to the wrath of God. Salvation—justification by faith through Jesus Christ our propitiatory sacrifice, brings us to the glorious conclusion and utter certainty that we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him.

Then we noticed that the second section does not have to do with the wrath of God, but it has to do with the second reason why we need to be saved: the wreckage of Adam's sin, that is, the wreckage that Adam's sin caused, and has caused in an increasing way all down the centuries. Therefore, if you like a neat phrase, whereas part one was concerned with *justification*, part two is going to be concerned with what is popularly called *sanctification*. In using that term, I do so with caution, because we shall find when we come to chapter 6 that a great part of our sanctification still depends on our being justified in the legal sense of that

term. But let that simple contrast help us in now coming to grips with the main arguments of part two of the Epistle to the Romans.

### **The coherent argument of section two**

We noticed that if it begins with the wreckage of Adam's sin, the section ends once more with a tremendous sense of triumph based in the love of God. Creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption brought on by Adam's sin (8:21). And we who already have the firstfruits of the Spirit within us shall receive our adoption, that is, the redemption of our bodies (v. 23). The wreckage will be put right, and we will be brought to glory and be conformed to the image of God's Son (vv. 29–30). And we are assured once more as we come to the triumphal end that the love of God is such, and has been so demonstrated in the giving of his Son for us, that we can be utterly sure that nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (vv. 31–39). We noticed the repeated pattern, the climax on each occasion in the love of God and its sense of utter certainty. And we notice again in this second major part of Romans the coherence of its argument. In other words, it isn't just a collection of happy verses; it is a coherent argument.

We looked at this briefly last time; let us try to get hold of it again now. Here are the major arguments of the second section of Romans.

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|----|-----------------|--|
| 1. | Romans 5:12–21  | The root of our ruin and of our recovery.  |
| 2. | Romans 6:1–14   | The legal basis of sanctification: 'he who has died has been justified from sin'.                  |
| 3. | Romans 6:15–7:6 | No penalty, but consequences, wages and fruit.   |
| 4. | Romans 7:7–25   | The law's inability to sanctify: its true function in the process of sanctification.               |
| 5. | Romans 8:1–39   | The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the secret of sanctification: and its implications. |
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#### *1. The root of our ruin and of our recovery (5:12–21)*

Whereas through Adam we were ruined, in Christ we are restored.

#### *2. The legal basis of our sanctification (6:1–14)*

We stressed the legal basis of our sanctification last time, and I want to stress it again. This is the key to understanding what Romans 6 is actually talking about. For many people wish at this point to go off and consider the practical work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts (and that is exceedingly important). They get a little bit impatient at this stage with Paul for bringing in the matter of justification, when now they really were so hoping that he would talk about sanctification. But in the second major argument of this part of Romans, Paul is talking about the legal basis of sanctification: 'He who has died has been justified from sin' (v. 7).

#### *3. No penalty, but consequences, wages and fruit (6:15–7:6)*

Then in the third major argument of this part of Romans, Paul interjects a paragraph that points out to us that, though there is no penalty for those that are in Christ Jesus, there are

practical consequences of sinning. That is something that sometimes gets overlooked when we emphasize the fact that 'there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (8:1); and once justified, we are justified for all times, accepted by God and are sure of God's heaven. We sometimes overlook the fact that, while there is no penalty, there are consequences of sinning.

#### *4. The law's inability to sanctify: its true function in the process of sanctification (7:7-25)*

Then we come on to the function of the law in this context, and once more to a highly debated question. Who is Paul talking about in Romans 7 when he presents such a miserable account of people who want to do good and never succeed in doing it? However, we shall have to notice the place of this discussion of the law's inability to sanctify in the order of the argumentation.

Here is the second part's equivalent of what, in the first part of Romans, was a demonstration that the law has no power to justify us. We cannot be justified by the works of the law. Now, in the second part we are being reminded that we cannot be sanctified by simply doing the works of the law. It is true, according to chapter 8, that 'the righteous requirement of the law' is meant to be fulfilled in us 'who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit' (8:4); but that righteous requirement of the law being fulfilled is not dependent on our simple, unaided attempts to keep the law. The law as law cannot sanctify you. It is altogether dependent on the Holy Spirit's living power within that can bring about such a state that the righteous demand of the law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. And hence we have the next section.

#### *5. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the secret of sanctification: and its implications (8:1-39)*

This is the secret of sanctification and the far-reaching implications of the work of the Spirit within us. He will eventually conform us to the very image of God's Son, that we may be glorified together with him.

So, those are the major arguments in this part of Romans, at least as I see them. And it is our job now to get down to some of the detail.

### **The root of our ruin and of our recovery (5:12-21)**

The first paragraph, the first argument, runs from 5:12 to the end of the chapter. This is a passage that is going to talk to us about the fall of the human race and the consequent wreckage. Its relevance to the question of sanctification is this. You can tell me that I can be justified through faith in Christ (that's part one of the epistle), but if you are concerned about my being sanctified and you are wanting to make me holy, you had better have a thoroughgoing, realistic analysis of what's wrong with me. If you haven't got that, and if you think I'm a nice, rosy red apple with just one or two specks here and there that could easily be cut out by the skilful use of a knife and then I should become the nice, rosy red apple that I always was generally, then you will be sorely disappointed.

If we are going to talk about sanctification and helping people to realize it in their lives, we must have an adequate concept of what is wrong with us. And as it comes to me

personally, well, you may feel aggrieved by all my shortcomings: my difficult, angular personality and goodness knows what else. I want to tell you that a good deal of it is my fault, but it isn't all my fault. Do please bear that in mind. I had some delightful parents. They were believers, and I owe them a debt I can never repay them but, like the rest of us, they weren't perfect. And sometimes the way they treated us, their children, wasn't perfect either. It stored up all sorts of resentments like children get in their hearts. And then, if all the rest of you had been perfect saints, life would have been easier for me. The trouble with me is you, because you are a funny lot when all is said and done. You too are not perfect. And it's not just you who are assembled here today but this whole world. Please, if you are going to put me right, do understand what it is that is wrong with me.

### **Understanding Romans 5:12**

Here begins the story. It goes back to this one man, Adam:

Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin . . .

Sin was the channel that allowed death to enter.

. . . and so death passed unto all men, for that all have sinned. (5:12)

Now, as I pointed out in our previous sessions, there is a translational question here in the end of that verse. Should you translate it 'all sinned' (when Adam sinned, that is)? Or should you translate it 'all have sinned' (each one personally since then)? Serious expositors find themselves in disagreement over it.

#### *Two Reformed views*

Reformed theologians in particular want to translate it that 'all sinned when Adam sinned', meaning that all were somehow involved in his sin and hence all die. They have different ways of explaining how that could be true. The older version was that we were 'in the loins of our father', Adam, as the Scripture would put it (see Heb 7:10). We were all in Adam (DNA and all) when he sinned, and he passed onto us this now imperfect set of DNA and cells and what have you. But because of that, when he sinned (and we were in him then) we sinned when he sinned.

Other Reformed theologians say, 'No that couldn't possibly be true.' Now they explain what happened by bringing in the concept of 'federal headship'. Adam was the head of the race; therefore the entire race is involved with the sin of Adam. You want an analogy? When Hitler declared war on much of the rest of the world, then all who were Germans, because they were under Hitler, were guilty with him. They declared war when he declared war, and therefore when it came towards the end of the war, though international law and the Geneva Convention suggested that no army should go and destroy innocent people, the allies authorized the mass bombing of Leipzig and Dresden, deliberately killing tens of thousands of innocent civilians. Why? Because they were Germans, that's why. They were in the enemy camp. Federal headship suggests that when we were born into this world we were born into what was an enemy camp, as far as God was concerned, and we must be treated as enemies

unless by repentance and faith we cut ourselves off from it, so to speak, and we stand aside from that enemy camp.

I find those explanations very difficult myself. I think that the first one was nearer the truth. The allies did bomb Leipzig and Dresden in Germany and killed comparatively innocent citizens just because they were Germans and on the German side. I think it's very difficult to consider God doing the same thing and condemning people to his judgment just because they are born into this fallen world and fallen race. I know I have not answered the theologians' ideas. We haven't the time to do it.<sup>10</sup> I do point out to you that serious, God-fearing theologians differ on this matter, and you are responsible to think it through for yourselves.

#### *An alternative view*

I think the word should be translated in this way: 'So, death passed unto all men, for that *all have sinned*.' One of the arguments against that view is as follows.

Little babies die. It would be cruel and wrong, surely, to suggest they die because they 'have sinned'. When does a child of two days old happen to have sinned? So people say that this is an impossible translation: 'So death passed unto all men, for that all have sinned.' Little babies don't sin, yet they die. My answer to that must be that Paul is here talking about responsible people who have grown to that stage of responsibility that when they do wrong they often know it is wrong. But little babies, those with severe mental disabilities and suchlike people are a special case, which he doesn't stop to talk about here.

But with the end of verse 12 Paul now inserts a parenthesis. He has said in verse 12: 'As through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and as a consequence death passed to all people', but then he breaks off. He has begun a comparison: 'one man sinned and as a consequence all died', but he doesn't draw the other side of the comparison until he comes to verse 18: 'So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation' (restating the first part of the comparison); and then in the second half of verse 18 the second side of the comparison is made: 'even so through the one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification by faith.' But for the moment, from verse 13 onwards, we have a parenthesis, because he wants to explain certain things.

'So, death passed unto all for that all have sinned.' In verse 13 he now begins to explain how he can say that: 'For until the law [that is, the law of Moses] sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.' The word 'imputed' is not a good translation. I don't know what your translations have. The word means: 'it is not reckoned out'.

For example, dangerous driving is always a bad thing, and therefore the authorities have imposed a regulation: 'You shall not drive over 30 mph within a built-up area'. Now, there is a law, and if you break that law the charge of dangerous driving can be brought against you because now your sin can be brought out and measured exactly and defined, and you are convicted under a law. Whereas if there is no law you can't be convicted of having broken the law.

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<sup>10</sup> For further discussion of this specific topic see the series of talks by Dr Gooding entitled 'The Glorious Gospel of the Blessed God', particularly Question 6 in the Q & A session. Free audios, videos and transcripts of that series can be found on [myrtlefieldhouse.com](http://myrtlefieldhouse.com).

So, what about all those who lived long before the law of Moses was given, people to whom no external law was given by revelation of God? It doesn't mean they didn't sin; of course they all sinned during that period, but you couldn't 'compute', you couldn't 'reckon it out' when there was no law. Nevertheless, people died. In spite of there being no law that could compute their sin exactly, 'nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression' (v. 14). That means that when Adam sinned it wasn't just a sin, it was a positive transgression and disobedience. Adam did have a law, and the law said, 'You shall not eat of this tree of the knowledge of good and evil' (see Gen 2:17) It was an explicitly given law. He did have a law, and his sin took the form of *transgressing* a published law. Now, if there isn't a law you can't transgress against it, can you? These many thousands of people sinned but not 'after the similitude'<sup>11</sup> of Adam, because they didn't have a revealed law. Yet they sinned. Those sins weren't like Adam's sin in the sense that they weren't deliberate transgressions of a law externally promulgated in the way that God promulgated the law of Moses on Mount Sinai.

And it is very difficult for me to think that Paul really believed that when Adam sinned, they sinned, because if when Adam sinned they sinned at the same time, then they must have sinned 'after the similitude of' Adam's transgression. If they sinned when Adam sinned, it must be true that they transgressed when Adam transgressed. Here in verse 14 it says they *did not* sin after the same manner as Adam. You'll notice that. They sinned. They didn't have explicit, revealed law; nevertheless death reigned over them as a result of Adam's sin. And I conclude therefore that while you cannot say that people are guilty of Adam's sin because they are descended from him, people inherit a nature that was ruined in part by Adam's sin. I would sum up what I'm thinking by verse 19:

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners . . .

That is, they were 'constituted sinners'. Or, as the old theologians would say, they were 'sinners by nature'. We inherited a fallen, sinful nature as a result of Adam's disobedience. And in the same way:

. . . even so through the obedience of the one [that is, Christ] shall the many be constituted righteous.

#### *A summary of the argument*

Now, let us sum up the argument thus far and see its importance. If it was true that, because the race was in Adam when he transgressed and sinned, and because I was in Adam at the time, I am to be charged with the guilt. I am involved in the guilt and deserve the penalty. If that is going to be charged to me, I deserve the penalty of Adam's sin. Well, now how am I constituted righteous? Through the obedience of Christ, says verse 19. Am I to claim, 'Ah, then I was a part of it, and I obeyed. When Christ obeyed, I obeyed.'

Really? I shall have to ask you to examine your conscience as to what you really believe. Do you really believe that when Christ obeyed you obeyed as well, and your justification is

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<sup>11</sup> The ESV renders this portion of Rom 5:14 – 'those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam'. The RV renders it 'them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression'.

partly due to the fact that you obeyed? No, I think you'll not say that. At least I hope you won't. Through the one man's one act, we were constituted sinners. Through the great act of obedience of Christ at Calvary, we are constituted righteous. We are not guilty of Adam's sin; we were wrecked by it. We are not to be credited with Christ's obedience, but we are saved through it.

That brings us back to verse 14, where at the end Paul makes the point that Adam is a figure, if you like, of him that was to come. Meaning, there is a certain parallel between Adam and Christ. Adam, by his one act of disobedience *ruined* the race. Christ, through his one act of obedience *saves* all who are in him. You see the parallel. And Paul will express that parallel precisely in verses 18–21.

### **An unequal equation (5:15–17)**

Having said that Adam is a figure of him that is to come, in verses 15–17 Paul again pauses to introduce another idea, because he is afraid that you might get the wrong impression. You might think when he says that Adam was a figure of Christ therefore there is a straight equation: just like Adam sinned and ruined the race, Christ obeyed and saves all who trust him. You might think that both sides were in that sense equal, and that would be a wrong idea to get from the analogy. They are not equal, for on the side of Christ there is an exceeding great excess of benefit. Christ did not just put right what Adam put wrong. Christ has made possible a far more glorious state of affairs than even existed before Adam sinned. At which point we shout 'Hallelujah!' in our hearts. Adam has done us a great disservice, of course he has, and brought in a bewildering amount of sorrow and suffering and sin and all the ugly things connected with it. Christ has not only put it right; through his obedience we shall know a glory that is far in excess of what Adam had even before he sinned.

So, Paul pauses in verses 14–16 to point out this matter of the excess on the side of Christ. And, first of all, he states the fact:

But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift.

There is not a complete parallel between them.

For if by the trespass of the one the many died . . .

On the side of Christ there is a 'much more'.

much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ abound, unto the many. (v. 15)

The gift of God is far more, abundantly more, than whatever Adam lost.

And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift . . .

Once more, he is stating the fact. There is not an exact parallel between them.



for the judgement came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. (v. 16)

Ponder it. Adam only did one sin, one transgression, and the result was the horrific wreckage that we all know. If that is the result of just one sin, then add up all the sins that you can think of in the whole of history. Yet the death of Christ is enough: 'the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification'.

At this moment we needn't concern ourselves with all the sins of history; we can ask about our own sins. Have you just done one sin, like Adam? His one sin was enough to wreck the whole human race. How many have you done? And can you compute the ongoing effects of your sin?

Here is a fifty-five year old schoolmaster, and for the first thirty years of his teaching profession he taught children evolution in the sense that there is no Creator God, and he destroyed the faith of many. At fifty-five he gets converted, and he himself is saved. But what about the consequences for the many generations of children whose faith he destroyed? When will it be possible to compute adequately the seriousness of that man's sin? That is tremendous, isn't it? The judgment came of one sin, one trespass, to condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. The benefit is on the side of God.

And finally we read:

For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ. (v. 17)

They are delightful terms, aren't they? Through the trespass of the one, death *reigned*. It is the second time in this paragraph the phrase occurs. First we read 'death reigned' (v. 14); now once more: 'death reigned' (v. 17). Like some enormous juggernaut, rolling irresistibly through the streets, and people who happen to fall in the way of it get crushed, so is this effect. Through the trespass of the one 'death reigned'. Remorselessly, irresistibly, it reigned. But on the side of salvation you will not only be spared and forgiven, you will not only have a kind of a life that is survival; it is here said that we shall '*reign in life,*' like sovereign kings! Not like slaves under a master, that is, death. We shall reign sovereignly 'through the one, even Jesus Christ'.

### **By the one great act of obedience (4:18-21)**

That said, now in verse 18 he comes back to the point that there is a similarity between Adam on the one hand and Christ on the other, and now it is safe to notice that similarity. Once you have been reminded, of course, that the benefit is all on the side of Christ (ten million times over), now there is a similarity, and it is worth noticing.

So then as through the one trespass the judgement came unto all men to condemnation; even so through the one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. (v. 18)

Pray notice it: one act on the part of Adam; one act on the part of Christ. And what was the one act of righteousness that was performed? Yes, 'Calvary', I hear somebody say. But just let's check another Scripture to show our interpretation is true to Scripture. There are some people who think that throughout those years of his manhood Christ accumulated a lot of righteousness personally, and that the personal righteousness of Christ, brought out throughout the years of his life, is somehow put to our account. That is not what this verse is saying. This verse is talking about 'one act of righteousness' that brings us this free gift to justification of life.

So, let's look at Hebrews 10 and at what the argument is. The early verses of this chapter tell us that the blood of bulls and goats couldn't take away sin. Therefore, when Messiah comes he speaks in the words of the Psalms:

Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,  
but a body have you prepared for me;  
in burnt offerings and sin offerings  
you have taken no pleasure.

This is a quotation from Psalm 40. Messiah has noticed that sacrifices of animals are no good — they don't do the job. So, having said that, Messiah then says,

Behold, I have come to do your will, O God . . .  
(Heb 10:5–7 ESV)

Messiah is now providing what the animal sacrifices could never provide. He's come to do that specific thing. What sacrifices couldn't do, he has come to do, and to do the will of God: 'I have come to do your will, O God.'

And then the writer of Hebrews is at pains to point out that you must read these statements in their context. This statement, 'I have come to do your will, O God', follows what was said immediately before.

When he said above, 'You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings' (these are offered according to the law), then he added, 'Behold, I have come to do your will.' He does away with the first in order to establish the second. (vv. 8–9 ESV)

His coming to do the will of God follows the observation that, "'You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law)'. Then at that point he said, "'Behold, I have come to do your will.'" He does away with the first in order to establish the second.' He takes away the old offerings ('the first') that he may establish the second. This is the doing of 'the will of God'. Well, in what respect did he do the will of God that removed the need for offerings? The next verse tells us.

by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for ever. (see v. 10)

This is the great act of obedience that he came to do. It was done once. Its results, of course, last eternally. It is by the one great act of obedience.

You will notice how the records of Gethsemane bear this out, for when it came to Gethsemane and all that it would imply, our Lord represented it as a cup that was now being given to him—full of the wrath of God and the judgment of God against sin. And Christ had to face it. The question was: would he take it and drink it, or wouldn't he? You should not read what he said as though it were an advertising gimmick. When he said, 'Take this cup from me', he meant what he said. Read it in Mark's account and you will see how skilful his prayer was, though very brief. 'Abba, Father' he said, 'all things are possible, all things are within your power. Take away this cup from me' (see 14:36).

Heaven never heard a more skilful prayer: 'Abba, Father.' Notice the word of affection. 'By your love for me, Father, I plead you: take away this cup. All things are within your power. By your power I plead with you!' Oh but immediately he is saying, 'But in spite of that, nevertheless, not my will but yours be done' (see v. 36). And when it became apparent that this was the Father's will and there was no removing of the cup, then he didn't just give in. No, no! He wasn't giving in to the inevitable. He prayed it with every fibre of his being: 'Your will be done!'

It has often been observed that Adam transgressed in a *garden*. There the disobedience was committed. It was in a garden that our Lord made his prayer positively: 'Your will be done', and fulfilled it at Calvary. How different he was from Peter, wasn't he? At the Last Supper our Lord said, 'Peter, you will deny me.'

Peter said, 'No! Well, that's almost comical, Lord. These others might, perhaps (I've my doubts about some of them) but I would never! I would go to prison and to death for you!' (see Matt 26:31–35).

Oh, he was quite ready to suffer. There was no difficulty there at all. And thus he came into the garden, and when he records it in his own epistle he says, 'It is better to suffer *if the will of God so will*' (see 1 Pet 3:17). When he talked to Christ he said, 'Lord, if it's *necessary* I would suffer and go to death.' What kind of necessity was he thinking about? If it's necessary, and I can't get out of it? Or, I can't fight my way out? What kind of *necessity* was he thinking of? When he got into the garden he found it wasn't necessary, and he ran off.

Our Lord didn't come like that, dancing into the garden saying, 'Oh the cross. Yes, I'd be happy to go to the cross!' Of course not. The more sinless he was, the more he would be horrified at the prospect of being counted as sinful for us. Yes, 'by that one act of obedience', and we come back to Romans 5:19.

And the final comparison is this.

And the law came in beside, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly [or, did much more abound]. (v. 20)

What does it mean that 'the law came in that the trespass might abound'? Well, possibly two things. If there is no law—no 30 mph speed limit, no hidden speed cameras, and no policemen standing up beside the road with a radar gun, then it looks as if very few folks drive dangerously. If you bring in a law, it will show you that rather a lot of folks drive dangerously.

And there is another thing. The law coming in, as chapter 7 remarks, means that the actual existence of a prohibition: 'you shall not do . . .' stirs a lot of people to go and do it. They are not going to be told by somebody else what they may and may not do. And they go and do the very thing to try and assert their freedom. The law came in 'that sin might abound' (5:20). God wasn't naive when he gave Christ to die, you know. He first exposed sin by his law so that the full extent of it might be seen. But 'where sin abounded, grace did much more abound', or 'abound more exceedingly' (see v. 20).

If you can begin to think of the abounding of sin then even so you have a poor yardstick by which to measure the exceeding abundance of the grace of God.

That, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (v. 21)

Here is the magnificence of grace. That magnificence was nowhere shown more clearly than at Calvary. Where did sin abound? What would you cite on earth as being the high watermark of human sin and rebellion against God? Would it be the Holocaust, or another atrocity? No, not if you believe that Jesus is the Son of God. It was when the very people that were his own, the nation appointed by God to be the vehicle through which Messiah would come into the world, with the grace of God's presence in the tabernacle and the giving of the law and the priesthood; when that nation showed what lies at the root of the human heart and they murdered the Son of the creator of the universe. 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.'

The doctrine of the fall is a very good doctrine, and it is to be accepted with open arms. It does say that we are sinners—serious sinners. It will admit that it is not all our fault. But whereas we were ruined by the disobedience of the one, we shall never perish simply because one man disobeyed. Whereas we were ruined by one, we can be saved by what one man did. And the benefit of salvation is more and more and much more than the loss incurred through what Adam did. Of course, since all of us have sinned personally, it does depend in our turn that we shall repent of it and be reconciled to God and be justified by his grace.

But that statement of the grace of God and salvation by grace raises very big questions, and it is to the answering of those questions that Paul turns in chapter 6 and following.

## [Shall We Continue in Sin?](#)

### *The Wreckage of Adam's Sin—Part Three*

#### **Objections to salvation by grace**

The doctrines of salvation and justification by grace raise problems for many people and particularly for religious people. They did so in Paul's day, and they do so in our day. If you tell anybody who is religiously minded that you are saved and sure of it, and you will be in heaven because salvation is by grace and not by your works, they very frequently understand you to mean that, because salvation is not by works, it doesn't matter how you behave. They think that if it is by grace then it doesn't matter if you sin. And that seems to them to be so obviously impossible that your doctrine of salvation by grace through faith must itself be seriously questionable. It is a comfort, surely, to notice that when Paul preached the doctrines of salvation by grace through faith apart from the works of the law, he too had these objections thrown at him.

#### **An overview of the objections Paul faced**

The first objection comes in the form of a question: 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?' (6:1). An interesting deduction follows, of course. If it was true that Paul had preached everywhere that salvation was partly through grace, but of course it did depend in large measure on your works, then nobody would have accused him of teaching that you can be saved and it doesn't matter whether you sin or not. The very fact that they raised these questions against him shows that he did preach salvation by grace through faith, apart from the works of the law. We mustn't be surprised, then, if we get these kinds of objections thrown at us when we teach salvation by grace. They will come particularly from religious people because, according to them, salvation by grace means we teach it doesn't matter how you behave thereafter: you'll be saved because it's through grace.

We ought to just pause a minute to remind ourselves of what the Bible here means by *grace*, because some people think that 'salvation by grace' means that God gives you the grace to do the works that thereafter merit your salvation. And that if you should eventually be saved because your works were jolly good, or on the whole moderately decent, or at least above the pass mark, then you will be the first to admit that it was God's grace: 'I owe it to God that he gave me the grace to do the works, and then I passed the exam and did good enough to pass.' That's what they mean by grace. But grace doesn't mean that, does it? No, it doesn't in this context. It means salvation by grace, not of works — apart from the works of the

law — through faith. Therefore, at the end of chapter 5, where Paul comes to this minor climax, he follows it immediately with a question. The climax is in verses 20–21.

where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly: that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness . . .

He follows immediately by raising the question that he doubtless had heard thousands of times from Jewish objectors and others: 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?' (6:1).

When he thereafter would have said that salvation was only through grace, but not by the works of the law, so you can't be saved by keeping the law, then he met another objection. In 6:14 he says, 'sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under law, but under grace.' Here comes therefore an objection to that: 'What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace?' (v. 15). That is the second objection.

When he talks later about our being delivered from the law and married to another, and indicates that law can never sanctify us, he is met with a third objection: 'What shall we say then? Is the law sin?' (7:7). To imply that you cannot be sanctified by the law, are you saying there is something wrong with the law? Is the law sinful or something? You notice how each of these objections follow on the particular part of salvation that Paul is expounding.

And finally we read, not an objection but a summary: 'What then shall we say to these things?' (8:31). In other words, what deductions shall we make from this exposition of salvation through the spirit of God?

### **Shall we continue in sin?**

Let's come back to this first objection.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? (6:1)

And Paul immediately repudiates the whole idea:

God forbid [Not on your life. Never.] We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?  
(v. 2)

Now we meet for the first time what we shall meet many times throughout chapters 6 and 7. It is this idea that we have 'died to sin'. This is not just theory; this is absolutely and exceedingly practical.

### **Dead to sin**

We must try and take care to understand what Scripture means when it says we have 'died to sin', for we get that expression again, along with other expressions. Look at verse 6: 'knowing that our old man was crucified with him'. If you are reading the Authorized Version it says, 'our old man *is* crucified with him'. The translation is exact, and it was correct, but it is old English and doesn't any longer mean what 'is crucified' means in modern English. 'Is crucified' in modern English is a present tense and suggests that the person being crucified is

constantly being crucified. In old English 'is crucified' meant 'has been crucified'. 'The master is come and calleth for you' means, in modern English, 'The master has come . . .' (see John 11:28). 'I am come into my garden, my lover, my spouse'. There 'I am come into my garden' means, 'I have come into my garden' (see Song 5:1). In French, as you many know, it is: '*Je suis*'—I am; '*venu*'—come. And 'I am come' is the perfect tense in old English. It is important that we see here that the phrase is that our old man *was crucified* with him at some point in the past.

But even with that being clear, what is meant, please, by 'the old man'? And what was that which 'was crucified'? And then there's the next phrase: 'that the body of sin might be done away'. What on earth is that when you meet it? What is 'the body of sin'? Then we are told in verse 11: 'Even so reckon you also yourselves to be dead unto sin.' And what does that mean?

To emphasize the importance of thinking very carefully, let me cite an interpretation that has been given, again, by sincere, devoted believers who wanted to be practical in their understanding of being dead to sin and insist this must apply to practical life.

#### *A practical psychological device?*

Some have said, 'Look, if you were to kick a living person he might punch you on the nose, but if you came to a corpse and you kicked it, it wouldn't make any response. If you swore at it and cursed it and were rude to it, it wouldn't be tempted to sin against you because it's dead and therefore can't respond. And we have to believe that we are similarly dead to sin, because we died with Christ, and therefore sin can't get at us, so to speak, because we are dead to it. We don't feel the temptations anymore.'

Oh. But then, what about experience? Most believers, if they try to think they are dead to sin (like a corpse is dead to you if you speak to it), find out that in experience it isn't quite so. If somebody is rude to them, they do feel like biffing them on the nose, or replying in kind (with a little interest added). And then there is a problem. They think, 'Well, how did this happen if I was dead to sin? Perhaps I'm not as dead as I ought to be.' And so came the idea that when verse 11 says that we are to 'reckon ourselves' dead this is to be interpreted as a practical, psychological device. So when I am surrounded with temptation I say to myself: 'I'm dead; I'm dead; I'm dead; I'm dead; I'm dead.' And if I keep on asserting that I'm dead, I shall find I am dead to sin.

But then sin has a way of coming around by the back door. Though well intentioned, that understanding of what it means to be dead to sin is not true to experience, in the first place. And because it isn't true to experience then people come to feel that this is all mere theory that doesn't work in practice. We do need, therefore, to spend some time taking it seriously as God's word and trying to understand what it says.

#### *What being dead to sin means*

So, let's start at the end, so to speak. What does it mean to say we are dead to sin? Well, notice verse 11: 'Even so reckon you also yourselves to be dead to sin', because it has been said in the previous verses: 'knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death has no more dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he lives, he lives to God. In that same way you are to reckon yourselves dead to sin' (see vv.

9–11). Isn't that fair? Verse 11 says, '*Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin . . .*', that is, 'as Christ died to sin'. That means we must ask: in what sense did Christ die to sin?

#### *How Christ has died to sin*

We know he was tempted at the beginning of his ministry, but was it that, like us in daily life, he constantly had to struggle against sin and at last at Calvary he died? Then, oh what a relief, now he was literally dead and he didn't have to struggle against sin anymore? Well, putting it that way comes very near to being blasphemy. He was never 'alive to sin' to start with. And when he died at Calvary it wasn't that he'd been alive to sin all these years and fighting it hard, but eventually managed to escape by dying on the cross. That would be a serious slur on the character of Christ. He was never alive to sin like we have been. What does it mean then, that he 'died to sin'?

You will notice that it is expressed that 'he died to sin *once*', not constantly every day of the week throughout the whole of his life. It wouldn't have been true of him, during his life, that he had died. He was still alive. He 'died to sin once'. When? Well, on Calvary, of course. And what does it mean that he died to sin once on Calvary? It is talking about his death satisfying the legal demands of the law. The law says that the sinner shall die. Now, Christ was sinless, but when he took our sins upon himself he died; he paid the penalty of sin. That cleared the whole bill. He only needed to die once, and our discharge from the *guilt* of sin was there and then accomplished.

We are still talking in terms of justification—the legal side. And sometimes, if you say that, dear Christians will get impatient with you: 'Oh but you are legally minded. We want something practical.' But our job here is to understand what the passage is saying. In this part of Romans in which God is talking to us about our sanctification, we must let God know best what to say, and if he insists on talking about the legal side then we submit to it of course. And it is delightful gospel!

So, we died to sin when Christ died to sin. When Christ died for sin it was a legal matter. Our sins deserved the penalty of the law, which was death. Christ bore our sins in his body. The law commanded that he therefore should die, and he did die, but in dying he fully paid the penalty. And as far as sin was concerned, therefore (our sin, indeed), he'd never need to die again. That one death was enough, and he has been raised. Is that not so?

#### *Justified from sin*

Now we come back to two earlier verses:

Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that we should no longer be in bondage to sin; For he who has died is *justified* from sin.  
(vv. 6–7)

It does not say 'sanctified' but 'justified'. Pray notice the term and resist any temptation to make it mean something different here from what it means in chapter 3. What does it mean, 'he that has died is *justified* from sin'?

Well, suppose you had committed murder, and you were convicted in the old days when murder was a capital offence. The law wouldn't be satisfied until you were hanged. If



somehow you got out of prison, the law would follow you around the whole earth, and up from South America and round the North Pole and the South Pole, and east to west, the law would follow you until it caught up with you and insisted the penalty be paid. When it was paid, and you were executed, the law wouldn't chase you anymore. You would have been *justified*. Why? Well, the penalty had been paid. This is justification by the penalty having been paid.

'He that has died has been justified from sin.' If it is true that Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture—that he paid the penalty of the law, then the law has no more against us. We are justified. Now, I'll tell you something. There is said to be a book up in heaven that records all the deeds and sins, in particular, of every single person that has ever lived (see Rev 20:12). So, my name is there on the list. And wouldn't you like to get to heaven and (if you could) bribe the archangel and the recording angel just to have a look inside that book? 'Please turn under the letter G. We'd like to see what the truth is about this chap that sits there pontificating to us. I daresay there are some hidden things and red ink all over the place.' Well, you would see it. And a sorry list it would be! But if you then asked the law what it was going to do about it, it would look and say, 'You see the whole lot's crossed out. Don't you see that? He is dead. He has died.'

You'd say, 'That's funny, I saw him the other Saturday morning (talking rather too much). What do you mean, he has died?'

'Well,' the law says, 'as far as I know he has died, because he has accepted Christ and, as far as I am concerned, when Christ died, he died too.'

What a tremendous relief to the likes of me to know it: 'He that has died has been justified from sin.' This is the basis of our practical sanctification. We need to get it clear, therefore.

### **Buried with him in baptism**

How does baptism help, and what has baptism got to do with this anyway? Let's go back to the beginning of the chapter.

Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin . . . (vv. 1-2)

And now we see what it means. We died to sin when Christ died to sin. He died to sin because he paid the penalty. He died and of course now is risen again. But how shall we who died to sin (because we died with Christ) continue in sin?

Now, do see the force of the argument. Do you say you are a believer, and you are going to be in heaven at last? And do you say, 'There's no condemnation for me because Christ bore the penalty of my sin, and that means I'm free to go on sinning, because the penalty's been paid. And I am free to go on sinning and doing the things that cost Christ his life at Calvary.'

Well, if that's what you mean by being saved by grace then that's seriously astray. How is it thinkable that anyone who claims that he died with Christ (because Christ paid the penalty for his sin) and now he's free and there's no condemnation, could then say he's free to carry on sinning? That we do sin is a fact, but the idea that we should say that because Christ paid the penalty we are free to go on sinning, and it doesn't really matter, is for a true believer unthinkable.

This is the force of those words about the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11. It is not optional, we are required to remember the Lord because he commanded it: 'Remember me', he said (see v. 24). And he has required us to remember him by the means of bread and wine—the bread representing his body that was given for us at Calvary, and the wine representing his blood that was poured out for us at Calvary. And we meet to celebrate that fact. He died for my sins, according to the Scriptures. He paid the penalty and gave his life's blood. That's marvellous. 'But do be careful please', says Paul, 'that when you come to that, you come in the right state of mind' (see v. 27). And we had better judge ourselves, and discern ourselves, hadn't we? What if I am allowing sinful attitudes and deeds in my life, and I come to remember Christ and take the emblems while I am allowing unjudged sin in my life, and I come and dare take those emblems that tell me he died for me and bore the penalty of these sins, and I am still doing them as though it didn't matter? Well, then Paul tells us straight that if we take that attitude God will intervene. He will judge us—chastise us, in other words. We don't lose our salvation. 'When we are chastened, we are chastened by the Lord that we should not be condemned with this world' (see vv. 28–32). There is no condemnation, but if we abuse that and take the emblems while still allowing sin and doing questionable things, and thinking: 'Ah, well, Christ died for our sins, so our sins don't really matter', then of course God will eventually discipline us to bring us to the right frame of mind. We all miserably sin, but to let it go unjudged and not to discern ourselves and constantly apply God's word to our hearts to correct our false attitudes and false activities and just go along merrily because we say, 'Well, there's no condemnation, you know,' that is to do the unthinkable. 'How will we, who died to sin, live any longer in it?'

That is the argument of the passage, and you will see that this legal side to our sanctification is not mere theory. It has the most far-reaching, practical implications for the way we live. If we say we are saved by grace, but that involved Christ paying the penalty for our sins at Calvary, then that has practical implications.

### **Facts the believer must know**

So now we come across a succession of appeals to knowledge: 'Don't you know?' (v. 3); 'Knowing this' (v. 6); 'Knowing that' (v. 9); 'Don't you know?' (v. 16); 'Or is it that you don't know?' (see 7:1). Sanctification of the believer and its application in practical terms is dependent on *knowing* certain *facts*. It does not necessarily depend on feeling certain feelings, but on knowing certain facts.

Or are you ignorant that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?  
(v. 3)

(Did the symbolism of baptism not register with you?)

We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. (v. 4)  
Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be [disabled, put out of function, undermined]. (v. 6)

That leads us therefore to ask what this 'old man' is or was. And if we are not careful we shall fall into a little trap or a misunderstanding. I could think the old man is the bad part of me; and it's a bit troublesome, but of course the rest of me is quite decent. Now, what I want is some help to deal with that little bit of rot. You know, like when you get apples from the grocer's, and if you're not careful they're nice and red on one side and they've got a little bit of rotten stuff on the other. But if you get the apple peeler and you dig the rot out, then the rest of the apple is sound. And so people think of themselves, if they're not careful, as jolly nice on the whole: 'I confess I've a little pride here, and a little selfishness there. Sometimes I lose my temper elsewhere, but on the whole I'm a jolly decent chap. All I need is a little improvement by the grace of Christ.'

Well, that's a mistaken notion. Let me ask you: can you recall the occasion you were baptized? And I assume you have been. When you were baptized, which bit of you did they baptize—the nice bit?

'No, no,' you say.

Oh, they left that standing on the edge of the pool, and they didn't baptize that? So they baptized the nasty bit of you?

'Of course not!'

Do you mean they baptized the whole of you—the nice bits and the nasty bits?

'Precisely,' you say.

Yes, because this notion that, before the law, you can separate out the nice bits from the nasty bits is false, of course. You stand before the law, and it won't be concerned about the nice bits and the nasty bits. If you are hauled up for driving down a city street at 70 mph, and the magistrate says, 'Now I see you were doing 70 mph along this city street.'

You say, 'I know I was, sir, but I was behind one of these weekend drivers, and he wandered all over the road, and I wanted to get home to my darling wife and the matter was urgent. And I tried to get by, and he swerved out in front of me. In the end, I at last got free, and I lost my temper. I put the foot down and I went! Yes, it was a bit irresponsible but I lost my temper a bit. That's not my fault, sir. I am a decent chap on the whole. I'm kind to my children, and I contribute to charity and generally I drive sensibly. So, I don't think you should fine me that much, Your Honour.'

The magistrate says, 'Well if I could fine your bad temper, I would. I can't fine your temper; I have to fine you. You shouldn't have let your bad temper do it.'

The law must fine, not your bad temper, but you. And our baptism says that as far as the law was concerned it wasn't a question of nice bits and nasty bits. We were guilty, and the law demanded a penalty. It was that the whole person should be executed, finished and executed as severely as Christ was executed at Calvary. That is the law's position, and our old man *was* crucified—not 'is constantly being crucified' (that's another story). This is 'was crucified'. When? When Christ died, that the body of sin should be 'disabled', that it 'might be done away', that we should no longer be in bondage to sin, so that whole sinful setup would be brought to an end.

What does that mean? Well, perhaps it is best to use the example of Paul's own experience of what conversion meant.

## Paul's experience of conversion

We could look to Galatians for a moment, because it is helpful to see what he says elsewhere on this very point when he applies it to himself.

I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me. (2:20)

'I *have been* crucified'. Notice the past tense. This is not Paul saying, 'Day after day I practice self-crucifixion'. He is talking about an event in the past: 'I have been crucified with Christ.' Why was he crucified with Christ? Look at the previous verse.

I through the law died unto the law. (v. 19)

There came a point in Paul's life when he saw that the very law he was keeping (and felt himself to have kept very well and therefore much better than most of his contemporaries) condemned him to death. And through the very law that he studied and tried to keep, he was sentenced to death.

He says, 'I, through the law, died, and therefore dying passed out from under the control of the law.' How did that happen, and how did it change him? Well, remember what Saul's attitude to Christ and the gospel was. He felt that the Christians were a bunch of blasphemers of the worst order. They talked about salvation by faith—being justified apart from the works of the law, which was absolute antinomianism to Saul of Tarsus. And, what's more, they had the blasphemous effrontery to say that Jesus was the Messiah, but Jesus was crucified on a cross—hung on a tree! And the Old Testament said that, 'Cursed of God is everybody that hangs on a tree' (see Deut 21:23). 'How can these stupid Christians tell the world that somebody condemned and cursed by God was the Messiah?' It bordered on lunacy, and worse. And Saul determined, with all his might and main, to persecute this and stamp it out. The whole doctrine was morally irresponsible and went against his grain because he tried to keep the law. And as far as the righteousness which is worked by keeping the law, he was blameless, so he felt (see Phil 3:6). And this notion of salvation by grace without the works of the law undercut all moral responsibility. He persecuted those who held it therefore, and he was going to obliterate the name of Jesus from the earth.

Then on the Damascus road there shone a light from heaven around him, and he knew enough to know what it was (Acts 9:3–4). This was the *shekinah* glory of God, such as from time to time was to be seen over the tabernacle. And a voice from heaven said, 'Saul, why do you persecute me?' And he replied with utmost respect: 'Who are you, Lord?' He meant at that moment, presumably, ADONAI, if not YAHWEH. The Greek word *kurios* implies both. 'I am Jesus' came the reply, 'whom you are persecuting' (see vv. 4–5).

If Jesus was God, how can you explain it that Jesus was God incarnate but was cursed of God on Calvary when he was hung on a tree? And it dawned on him eventually. He was there because Saul's righteousness was absolutely bankrupt, and the only way Saul could have been saved, according to the law, was if someone had died for him and borne the curse of the law for him (see Gal 3:10–14). This not only brought him eventually to justification by faith; it changed the whole attitude of the man! Read what he says in Philippians 3: 'what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ . . . and do count them but dung' (vv. 7–8). All

that religious effort to build up his status, all the motivation that went behind it and the pride that followed it, were blown sky high by the death of Christ on Calvary.

And when Peter came along and compromised, and wouldn't eat with Gentiles (Gal 2:11–14), and those other chaps came along and said, 'Yes, faith in Christ is enough, but if you're a Gentile you have to be circumcised before you can be saved', of course Paul was nearly furious (Acts 15:1–2). 'Are you saying the death of Christ is not enough after all? And having trusted in Christ we are still found sinners and in need of a bit of circumcision to save us?' (see Acts 15; Gal 2:4–5). The attitude of heart that could say before God that the death of Christ is not enough, and we need a bit of circumcision to save us and grant us entrance into God's heaven, is preposterous.

What is my point? That the old man *was crucified*. Read Philippians 3 again. All that set up that Paul had built up before he got converted was now put out of action, and a lot of the motivation that went with it, because he'd died with Christ. If righteousness could have come by the law, then Christ has died for nothing, he says (Gal 2:21). Of course, Christ having had to die for you and bear the curse for you alters your whole attitude to what you might call your former self. 'Saul of Tarsus with all his law keeping and everything else was crucified with Christ', says Paul. 'That was God's sentence on me and my scheme of things, my attitudes, activities and everything else. My old man: my former self, my former attitudes came under God's judgment. I died with Christ in order that that whole body of sin that motivated me then (what I thought was very holy stuff), that whole body of independence of God, trying to work out my own salvation and all that kind of thing, was put out of action.'

This is not that we should not go on sinning, of course, but that we would live unto God. This is what baptism symbolizes.

### **The symbol of baptism**

Some people think you have to be very good to be baptized. The opposite is true; you have to be bad to be baptized. It's true, isn't it? You are admitting what God has long since pronounced: that you deserve to be dead, buried and got out of the way. And it has happened, through Christ, with whom we are now identified. But baptism is not merely a symbolic burial. Of course, we died with Christ and we were buried, but baptism doesn't kill you. We didn't die by being baptized. You only bury people that are already dead (it's against the law to bury them in order to kill them). But through repentance and faith in Christ we are now regarded by God as having died when Christ died. We symbolize that by being baptized into his death—baptized to Christ, identified with Christ—buried therefore with him. But it is also a symbolic resurrection (mercifully). So coming out of the water is equally significant as being submerged under it.

It is a pity that the old arguments have emphasized that baptism is by *immersion*. That is perfectly true and worth repeating, but baptism is by *emersion* as well. For I see that when you were baptized they didn't leave you under the water, which I'm glad to report. Your coming out of the water was just as significant as your going in.

that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. (Rom 6:4)

That last expression: 'so we also might walk in newness of life', isn't a sort of vague wish that says, 'Well, I hope I shall; and I'm now saying before this congregation as I rise from the water of baptism that I hope I can live a better life than I did before, and that's what I'd like to do, anyway.' No, no. The motive behind that kind of hope is good, I'm sure, but you are symbolizing a wonderful *fact*. Whereas God's law commanded your death and therefore you died with Christ and now you are buried with him, the gospel is that, Christ being raised from the dead, you are raised too; and God who raised him from the dead has given you the very life of Christ in you to walk in a new life! It isn't a wish; it's a fact. It's not merely: 'You've been forgiven; now try to be good.' No, you have been delivered from the penalty of the law by dying with Christ. In the law's eyes you are already dead; but the other side of the gospel is that, in raising Christ, God has raised you and given you this new life so that you might walk to the glory of God. This is the positive side.

Now notice the advantage:

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more, death no more has dominion over him. (v. 9)

The penalty has been paid.

For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he lives he lives to God. (v. 10)

Notice the positive side of it. The negative side is: penalty paid. But then the positive side is: life. And it is a life that God can accept.

### **He died to sin once**

'The death that he died, he died to sin once'. Oh what a merciful thing that is. And if, God forbid it, I commit further sins in my foolishness (but then it's scarcely an 'if' is it?), Christ doesn't have to die again. Have we got that? Is it true? He died to sin once. Or, to use the Hebrew terminology, having offered one sacrifice for sin forever he has sat down (see Heb 10:12).

In this business of sanctification there is a sense in which the moment we trust Christ we are sanctified, and therefore we are called *saints*. On the practical side, however, our ongoing sanctification is going to be a long thing, as long as life itself. Therefore it is important that we get these basic legal conditions into our hearts, for if we don't we can get confused about the basis of our sanctification. Didn't we start out with great fervour? We were going to be everything for God—for Christ; we were going to consider ourselves dead to sin and live for God. And you are now twenty-five or thirty years old. You wait until you get to fifty, and then you'll discover attitudes that perhaps you never knew existed, and come to see that what you then thought was marvellous, is in fact sinful. What will you do when you discover it? Well, if you thought that your acceptance with God depended on your progress legally, you would then be in very serious trouble. This legal basis for sanctification, therefore, is exceedingly important.

## Sin shall not have dominion over you

And you will see that this is said more than once. Look at the end of verse 6: 'so that we should no longer be in bondage to sin'; and again: 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey the lusts thereof . . . For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under law, but under grace' (vv. 12–14). Now put that in its context if you will.

neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you . . .

Why not?

for you are not under law, but under grace. (vv. 13–14)

What is the logic of that argument? In what sense shall sin not have dominion over you? Because 'you are not under law'. Pray notice it doesn't say, 'Not under *the* law'; it says, 'not under law', as a principle. That is the secret behind the fact that sin shall not have dominion over you, and you are therefore free and have a duty to present your members to God as alive from the dead, your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

You say, 'Well I tried it last Wednesday, and I was doing very well. In fact, I remember the occasion. I was at a meeting, and I really did devote myself to the Lord. I can tell you the date in the conference when I said to myself: 'You know, you're only a half-hearted Christian. You must take Christ seriously, and you must surrender your life to God absolutely and entirely, and your members.'" And I did that on that occasion, and I wanted to live for the Lord afterwards. I managed it for some months and years, and then I came unstuck.'

There are many believers in that situation, and in their fifties and sixties they'll tell you it didn't work! They will say, 'All these preachers were coming along and saying, "You should be devoted to God and Christ, and it works"; well it didn't with me, and I tried it, and it all came unstuck, and it's no good. But I don't want to be cynical . . .'

So they come and sit on the seats but inside they are nagged by inconsistency, yet they don't want to be cynical. For sin has dominion over them: it still drags them down. How is it possible to be delivered from this dragging down, this question of the overpowering of sin? It is possible because 'you are not under law, but under grace'.

I've said it to you before, but I'll say it again. It's a crude illustration, but if I woke up one Monday morning and had the law standing beside my bed, and it said, 'Now, Gooding, you made a lot of great statements on Sunday. You said you love the Lord, and how much you love the Lord. Put it into action, Gooding. This is Monday morning. Get up and love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and love your neighbour as yourself. And start right now!'

I say, 'What? With all my heart, mind, soul and strength?'

'Yes. And I am the law telling you to.'

Now, of course the law isn't simply advice. The Hebrew word for law means 'teaching', but it isn't just teaching. Law, as a principle, is command plus penalty, a prohibition plus penalty. That's what law is. It is not just advice. And so the law will say to me, 'Gooding,

you'll get up, and you'll love the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and if you don't I shall curse you.'

What would you do if you were me? I think some of you might even say, 'Well, all right, I'll do my best; I'll have a go.' But at my age I would say, 'Well I'm sorry; if that's the condition I'd better stay here. What's the good of my attempting it? I'll stay in bed.'

The law will then say, 'I'll curse you for staying in bed, anyway!'

Sin would hold us down. The moment we sinned, we'd be finished, and sin would get the advantage. And we would give up presenting our bodies and our members to God. How can it work then when I've made a big mistake and I've come unstuck as a believer? What's the good of my pretending and now saying again: 'I want to present my body?'

But, you are free to do it. Have you sinned; have you fallen? Well, confess it before the Lord, and he is faithful and just to forgive, because the penalty has been paid, and you are free to get up and, to put it crudely, to have another go! 'Sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are not under law but under grace.'

You will object and say to me, 'You are emphasizing one side of the story. You ought by now to have talked about the power of the Holy Spirit.'

Well, I will! I will say something about it. How could I do otherwise? For now I am stressing this legal side. It is, in my experience (not only in teaching but in pastoral work with people), exceedingly important that we get hold of it. It is the legal basis of our sanctification. This is the secret of our going onwards in spite of many shortcomings and many failures. The secret is that, if we are believers in Christ, then the penalty has been paid. We confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us, because the penalty has been paid. We are free to get up and have another go.

Could I tell you a story? You've probably heard it before many times, but then old men tell stories, you see (and you'll be old one day too). When I first came to Belfast, I was preaching a series of sessions in Victoria Hall on four Sunday nights. They used to get about four hundred people in. I preached one night on Peter's experience, of how he would talk about Christ as a rock, and that Peter did that because in his life he'd known various times when he felt he was sinking. He was going down and was liable to be overwhelmed, and he found Christ as a rock—solid to stand on. On the one occasion when he tried to walk on the water, that was a very good attempt, and the Lord bade him come, but he dithered. He took his eyes off the Lord and began to sink. When he cried, 'Save me!' he found the Lord there to bring him up and stand him on top of the water (and then to preach him a little sermon or two).

There was the other fearful time in the high priest's court. He'd intended to witness for the Lord when the servant girl started to talk and accuse him of being a disciple, and then the soldiers looked at him rather sternly. His whole inside churned over, and he felt himself slipping down the slippery slope, and he couldn't get hold, and got worse and worse involved, and three times he denied the Lord. And he found the Lord a rock beneath his feet: 'When you are turned again, strengthen your brothers' (see Luke 22).

So I preached on this, as best a youngster could do, in that gospel meeting that night. A day or two later, a businessman in town rang me up. I won't tell you all his long story, but as a young man he'd been a preacher. He was a Christian who was devoted, keen, beginning to



preach and was accepted by believers. He was in business and went to another city where he was offered a shady deal. He looked around and saw others who said they were believers but who in business were doing shady deals. He began to do this deal and began to go down the slope. He prospered in business. He had his own factory and was part of the government of the day in this province.

Eventually, he became so antagonistic to the gospel that he would drive his father to the gospel hall, leave him there and go away, then come and fetch him again. And he and his daughter were about to write a book 'Against the Brethren.' His business began to go wrong; he lost his seat in government; the struggles with his business led to a kind of a nervous difficulty. He hadn't been in a gospel hall for forty years when he came by that Victoria Hall early on the Sunday morning. He had been in his factory trying to stop it from going bankrupt. He came past and saw the announcement of this oddity going to preach that evening and felt overwhelmed that he must come, and so he came to the meeting. And the first thing he heard in forty years was how Peter felt like he was going down and slipping into a hole, and then discovered Christ as a rock. He said, 'When you said that; that was me! I couldn't get any handhold anywhere. I was slipping down into nervous and financial wreck.'

He was ringing me up that next day to tell me he'd come back to the Lord. What, after forty years? Yes, and he lived to show that 'sin shall not have dominion over you', because the penalty has been paid, and we are free on confession to get up and have another go. This is the gospel of sanctification.

## Not Under Law but Under Grace

### *The Wreckage of Adam's Sin—Part Four*

If we are to keep to our program, then in what follows I must content myself with pointing to general principles rather than with detailed exposition.

### **Shall we sin because we are not under law?**

At Romans 6:15 we get a second question:

What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid. (v. 15)

This is the second question in that series. The first one was:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? (6:1)

And you will notice how exact that is in the context. The one in 6:1 asks, 'What shall we say *then?*' It is followed by, 'Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?' because that was what he was talking about at the end of chapter 5. He was talking about the grace of God doing far more than the damage done by Adam's sin (vv. 20–21). Now when you come to 6:15, he doesn't just repeat himself. When he asks, 'What then? Shall we sin . . .', it is not now, 'that grace may abound'. This is asking, 'Shall we sin because we are not under law?' That is what verse 14 has just said:

Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under law, but under grace.

And this time, again in verse 15, that expression, 'not under law' could be grievously misunderstood. We saw in verse 14: 'Sin shall not have dominion over you because you are not under law', and we saw the reason for that. We are not under law as a principle, and therefore if as believers we sin, then confessing our sin we are not held down as by some great tyrant who now has captured us again so we can't escape. That is because we are not under law with its penalties; we are under grace. That leads then to the question: 'Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid.'

### **Practical reasons for not practicing unrighteousness (6:15–16)**

We must be very careful to notice what the reasons are that are now given in the rest of chapter 6. It is not now: 'you died with Christ, you have been buried with Christ and you are raised with Christ'. They are not the reasons given for not sinning. These are practical things.

Neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (v. 13)

You don't have to *obey* sin and its lusts. You are free to present your members to God. Does that mean because we are not under law but under grace we are free to sin? Well, that would be nonsense because now comes another fact that we must know.

Know you not, that to whom you present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants you are [his slaves you are] whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (v. 16)

Here the reason why we are not to continue in sin is because of the practical fact that, if you present yourselves to someone, to some master, to do what he says and thus to obey him constantly, you become that master's slave. If you constantly present your members to sin and its desires, you will become a slave to sin and those desires. And to say, 'Why shouldn't I carry on sinning, because I'm not under law?' is a nonsense. Do you want to be a slave again? So our Lord, talking to those who professed to believe on him said, 'If you continue in my word then are you really my disciples, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

They said, 'Free from what?'

He said, 'Free from sinning, gentlemen. For whoever continues practicing sin is a slave to sin.' With that they got engaged. Did he dare to suggest that they were slaves to sin? But he said, 'The slave doesn't stay in the house forever. The son stays forever, and if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed' (see John 8:31–36).

Those who profess to believe therefore need to remember this. Don't go on sinning. Why not? Because it will enslave you. We know at the ordinary psychological level that if you continue in an action it becomes habit forming. And habits, once formed, are remarkably difficult to break. From a practical point of view, therefore, to go on sinning is foolish; it leads you to slavery.

Let me put this to you from the other side. If you present your members to sin, you become a slave. But if you present your members to God and obey him, it will lead to practical righteousness; it forms a habit of righteousness. And the formation of good habits is exceedingly important in our spiritual training. We have to exercise ourselves unto godliness, Paul says to Timothy (1 Tim 4:7). We have to train at it because then it develops a habit.

### **The analogy of slavery (6:17–23)**

Now he talks about their conversion.

But thanks be to God, that, whereas you were servants of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto you were delivered; and being made free from sin, you became servants of righteousness. (v. 17–18)

That is a very interesting phrase. They were slaves of sin, with all the habits of that old way of life, but they became 'obedient from the heart'. They not only trusted the Saviour but 'became obedient from the heart to that form of doctrine into which they were delivered'. There come to my mind the things my mother used to use in the kitchen for forming jellies and other such things. They were made of tin, and they were a certain shape with knobs or decorations of various kinds in the tin itself. And when the jelly was put in, and then it set, you took the tin off and the jelly had taken the form of the tin. Isn't that how it works? 'You were delivered to a certain set of doctrine,' Paul says. 'You were put into it, so to speak, at conversion, and you obeyed it from the heart, and of course it began to form you to the doctrines into which you were delivered.'

It is vastly important not to be content with the sort of thinking that says, 'I trusted Christ in 1905 and I've been saved ever since, and I haven't read the word either.' It is important to read the whole doctrine because it is a mould into which we are poured, and it begins to mould us, and rightly. We needn't be afraid of its moulding of us, so long as our interpretation is true. And so Paul says, 'being made free from sin, you become servants of righteousness because, having found the Scripture and the doctrine and its commands, you accepted them and obeyed them; and they began to form you'. And it's no good objecting to the metaphor, you become 'servants of' it, 'slaves of' it. Listen to Paul: 'I, Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ' (see 1:1). Yes, he was delivered to 'the form of doctrine', the Lord's doctrine, and it moulded him and he became a servant to it. That's a happy slavery, that is.

Now he says,

I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity your flesh;

In other words, this is a practical way of talking, and it mustn't be pressed beyond its intended meaning.

for as you presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity,

The habit gets stronger. The habit to one iniquity will lead you on to other iniquities.

even so now present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification. (v. 19)

Notice the practical side of this. It isn't that one morning I shall wake up and say, 'Hello. I feel a bit different. Wait a minute, what's happened? I feel a bit holy. I know, I've become holy overnight!' It doesn't happen that way. It is a very practical thing. As I start obeying Scripture that the Lord puts before me, it will sanctify me, as it now says: 'You become servants of righteousness *unto sanctification*' (see v. 19). That will be its effect, practically.

Then we read the implications of his analogy.

For when you were servants of sin, you were free in regard of righteousness. (v. 20)

That's a little bit of irony there, isn't it? You became servants to sin; you were slaves of it and you felt yourself free from righteousness, and you didn't come anywhere near righteousness. Pray look upon it and see what fruit you had at that time.

What fruit then had you at that time in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life. For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (vv. 21–23)

Now, verse 23 is often preached in the gospel, and rightly so. Notice its context here, however. This is talking about the practice of developing sanctification, and it invites us to ponder the fact of this question. When you were servants of sin, what did you get out of it, ultimately? What were its consequences? And he says, 'You are now ashamed of some of those things. The consequence, the end of those things, is death. Now, being made free from sin by obeying the truth and becoming servants to God, slaves to God, and to his word, you have your fruit unto sanctification and the end—eternal life.'

#### *Eternal life is in Christ Jesus*

Here we shall have to think a little bit more deeply. 'Eternal life?' you say. 'I received eternal life the day I trusted Christ.'

So you did indeed. But what is it now that you've got it—this eternal life thing? It's not a bit of paper is it, a certificate handed out the night you trusted Christ?

'Here is the certificate; you now have eternal life.'

You say, 'That's marvellous, I'll put it in my strong box in my home so it will never be destroyed by fire. And there it is. Now and again I shall take it and have a look at it and see that there it says I have eternal life. Marvellous! Then I'll put it back in the box, and that's that. When the Lord comes from heaven I shall say, "Lord, half a minute, I want to get my certificate out of the box, which says I have eternal life."'

No, no. Eternal life is a *life*. It is therefore to be developed and entered into. We are to lay hold of it and develop it. And how do we develop all the potential of our eternal life? It is by this process of allowing ourselves to be moulded by the doctrines to which we have been delivered.

This is exceedingly practical stuff. This is not airy-fairy holiness, with sudden feelings coming tingling up the spine, and now I feel I've got holy. It is by this process of presenting ourselves to God. It starts at conversion, but it is an ongoing process.

'The wages of sin is death' (v. 23). As people have pointed out, *wages* are given for hard work, and sin is hard work in the end. And we have 'the free gift of God' as 'eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'. But do exploit it by continuing in and developing obedience to the truth and to the doctrines. 'If you continue in my word' says Christ, 'you shall be truly my disciples and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free' (see John 8:31–32). It is a continuing process of learning and obeying and being moulded by the truth.

Surely the eternal life is a gift; we get it at once. A baby has physical life. Twenty years from now it could be an Olympic gold medallist. You'd never have dreamed when you saw the baby that it had the potential for that. The potential was developed, yes, but it had to be

encouraged by rigorous, deliberate training; and the training increases the potential and has its rewards.

But now we come to another important point. That is that this eternal life is a free gift of God *in Christ Jesus our Lord*. There is no eternal life without Christ. We can't say, 'Now Lord, you've given me eternal life; that's marvellously generous of you. Thank you, Lord, very, very much. Now, I'm busy. Meet you in heaven, Lord, when I get there, because I don't need you anymore for the time being. I've got eternal life, you see. You've just given me eternal life, so goodbye for now, and I'll say a word for you now and again, but we'll meet in heaven, Lord.'

That's a nonsense. 'Christ is your life' says Paul (see Col 3:4). You don't have any eternal life apart from him. And you won't be able to say when you get to heaven, 'Lord, it's marvellous to be here, and it is your grace that brought me here. That is stupendous, but, Lord, as you might expect, heaven is such an interesting place, I shan't have much time to talk to you, because I've got this infinite experience to explore. So I hope to see you sometime in the next three hundred years. I've got eternal life!'

'No you haven't' says Christ, 'not apart from me, you haven't. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in yourself' (see John 6:53). That remains true of us. Christ is our life. We don't have any eternal life apart from him; surely we don't. What did you symbolize by your baptism, when you rose again? It wasn't that, now that you are forgiven you are going to try very hard. It was that you were buried with Christ, and now you're risen with Christ. It is your being joined to Christ that brings you eternal life.

### **Don't you know the law only has dominion over a living person?**

Now a question arises, and we come to another big fact that we are to know.

Or are you ignorant, brethren (for I speak to men that know the law), how that the law has dominion over a man for so long as he lives? (7:1)

And now the principle is illustrated by a particular law.

For the woman that has a husband is bound by law to the husband while he lives; but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband. (v. 2)

That is a particular law that illustrates the general principle that a person is bound by the law as long as she lives. If the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband.

So then if, while the husband lives, she be joined to another man, she should be called an adulteress: but if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man. (v. 3)

So, there is the law, the general principle. It has jurisdiction over us as long as we live. Take a particular law — the law of marriage: it is binding on the wife as long as her husband is alive. If her husband dies she is free from him. Now the analogy is applied.

Wherefore, my brethren, you also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that you should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God. (v. 4)

And what is the point of it?

### **The relationship of law to sanctification**

We have now entered a chapter that asks us to think of the relationship of law, as such, to sanctification, and particularly the law of Moses. This will be of special relevance to Jews who were brought up under the law of Moses. Paul represents the law as a husband. And the people were bound to the law, and the law is not going to die, so the only way people could get out from under this contract with the law was to die themselves.

Why all the fuss about this? It's because you can imagine a Jew brought up under the law suddenly realizing: 'Oh, do you know, the law is a bit of a hard master, and its standards are enormously high, and I have come short. I tell you what: I'll ditch the law and go off to some other principle.'

And the law will say, 'No you don't. You can't just run away from the law like that. What on earth do you mean that you think you can ditch the law?'

The law isn't going to die. You'll not get out from under the law just by saying, 'Well I got fed up with that, and it didn't work. I'm going to try something else.' No, you can't; you're bound to the law until one or other of you dies, and the law is not going to die. The only way you will get out from the authority of the law is to die. And this is what has happened. You have died to the law in the body of Christ, so that now we can be joined to Christ. Because there are two different principles behind sanctification. You can try it by being joined to the law and trying to fulfil its demands. The law says you must do this, so you say, 'Oh, I must try and do that.' And the law drives you, because it is your master. Or, there is Christ. These are the two 'husbands', if I might carry on the analogy.

The law as your husband? Well, he'd been an uncomfortable husband to live with! The law is a bit of a perfectionist, you know. Or there is Christ. You can't just switch from one to the other, unless you die to the law. And the fact is we are dead to the law through the body of Christ so that we might be joined to Christ.

I know it's only an analogy, but it is a delightful one, isn't it? It tells us that the heart of sanctification is a love story. It is not just trying to satisfy a code of rules and regulations; it is being joined to another husband. It is a love story. We are joined to another. And it is based on a different principle. What that principle is, he now goes on to tell us.

For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit and not in oldness of the letter. (vv. 5-6)

The old way was the oldness of the letter. The new way is that we serve in the newness of the Spirit. It is important, at this juncture, to understand what that verse is not saying and then to understand what it is saying.

We often hear the expression, 'Well, I kept the spirit of the law. I didn't keep the actual letter of the law, but I kept its spirit.' Here is a driver, and the police fine him because he's going over the speed limit: he's doing 60 mph through Belfast city centre. And when he's being brought to the magistrate they say, 'You broke the law, didn't you?'

'Well,' he'll say, 'sir, I certainly broke the letter of the law, but you know, the spirit behind that law is that you mustn't endanger human life. Normally I keep the law to the letter, and I wouldn't endanger human life, but I happened to have a person with me whose heart was bad. The only hope of saving him was to get to the hospital, and to keep his life I had to break the letter of the law, but I kept the spirit of the law.'

And some people talk like that about the commands of the New Testament: 'Well, you can't always take them literally, but you keep the spirit of it.' This is not what it's talking about whatsoever. The difference between keeping the letter of the law and the spirit of the law is nothing to do with the topic. Here Paul is referring to the difference between the old covenant under which Israel lived—the covenant based on the law given at Mount Sinai—and life lived under the new covenant, which comes into effect through Jesus Christ. And here the terms *letter* and *Spirit* refer to the two different systems.

#### *A minister of the new covenant*

Let's look at that for a moment. We can see how the two principles work in actual practice when Paul explains it a bit more in 2 Corinthians 3.

Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? Or need we, as do some, epistles of commendation to you or from you? [Of course not, for] you are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh . . . [God] also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. (vv. 1–3, 6)

He is talking about what happened at the conversion of these Corinthians. In their conversion, Paul was a minister appointed by God—a servant of the new covenant. And what are the terms of the new covenant? Well, you'll find them in Jeremiah 31. You'll also find them repeated in Hebrews 8.

In the new covenant God says that the old covenant failed in the end, and they didn't continue in it. 'So,' God says, 'I will have a new covenant.' And the terms run this way: 'I will put my laws into their hearts and on their minds will I write them' (see Jer 31:31–34; Heb 8:8–12). 'That is what happened at your conversion,' Paul says to the Corinthians. 'The living Christ took me as his pen. The Holy Spirit was the equivalent of the ink. And what the living Christ did was to write his laws in the power of his spirit on your hearts.'

That is conversion, of course. Writing commands on a bit of stone is comparatively easy, I suppose (if you're a good mason, and you've got a sharp chisel). Of course, stone is pretty



solid; it isn't fluid. And you can write the laws on a bit of stone, if you like. Well, God did, and Moses brought the stones down the mountain, and there they were by the ark, and they only had to look at the stones. They told you what to do and what not to do. There was a difficulty with it, of course, because they told you what to do but couldn't give you the puff to do it with. And they told you what not to do but couldn't give you the strength not to do it. They were just laws on a bit of stone.

The new covenant is different. It writes the laws of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, not on tables of stone but on tables of flesh—of hearts and minds. And writing laws on flesh is very difficult. Hearts and minds are so fluid. This is the miracle of the new birth performed by the spirit of God. He is not only bringing assurance of forgiveness and salvation but beginning the new life, the new principles of living. They are written by the Spirit as a living thing on our living hearts. That is the difference between the two. One is just having a code book with the rules in it, and you do your best to keep them. The other is having a heart on which Christ has written the laws of God and a mind in which they are written with the power and grace of the Holy Spirit.

This is the difference between the two. How we should indeed remember it, shouldn't we? We are now joined to another. It is in being joined to him, with his laws written on our hearts and minds, that we find the motivation and the power for sanctification.

#### *The new covenant and the Lord's Supper*

This is so important that every time you attend the Lord's Supper you are thereby symbolizing the new covenant. You will be aware of that, won't you? I just underline it as we pass by because there arose at one stage a form of *dispensationalism* that says the new covenant is nothing to do with us in this age; the new covenant is a covenant that God is going to make with the Jews after the church is gone, and therefore the new covenant has nothing to do with us.

I speak humbly, I hope; but that is quite false. The new covenant was made when the covenant victim was sacrificed. And when was that? Well, at Calvary, you rightly say. And the new covenant has already passed into law. Hebrews 8 speaks of a new covenant that has been enacted. That is, it has passed into law; it has been set up.

But now has he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which *has been enacted* upon better promises. (v. 6)

It does not say it will be one day. It *has been enacted*, and upon better promises, better than the old law, the old covenant. This is the new covenant.

When Moses was used of God to celebrate the old covenant, the blood of the animal was shed, and he took a basin and he sprinkled it on the people. And holding it up he said, 'This is the covenant that the Lord makes with you. This is it, and you've just assented to its terms.' And he sprinkled them with the blood (see Exod 24:3-8).

There came a moment when the new covenant was inaugurated. It was when Christ, with his apostles around the table in the Upper Room, took a cup of wine, and holding it out he said, 'Gentlemen, this is the new covenant in my blood, shed for the forgiveness of sins. I want you all to drink it' (see Luke 22:20). And Paul, talking to the Corinthian church, says, 'I want

you to remember that the night in which he was betrayed, our blessed Lord took bread, and he took the cup saying, "This is the new covenant in my blood" (see 1 Cor 11:23–25). This is talking to the Corinthian church, with a majority of Gentiles in it, I suppose. And it is here explicitly said, 'In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me"' (v. 25). And when at the Lord's Supper we take that cup from the Lord's hand, these are his words of command. What is this cup about? 'This cup', he says, 'is the new covenant in my blood. This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.' And to take that cup from him means I agree to the covenant and to its terms.

It would be odd if, after forty years of taking that cup at the Lord's Supper, we couldn't even recite the terms of the new covenant, wouldn't it? And what are the terms of the new covenant?

I will write my laws on their hearts, and on their minds will I inscribe them. They shall not teach every man saying to his neighbour, 'Know the Lord': for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. [That is, each shall have direct access to Christ.] And I will be merciful to their transgressions, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more. (see Heb 8:10–12)

This is marvellous. This is not the old letter of law written on stones; this is the new covenant, celebrated in remembrance of the Lord who instituted it. Its first claim is: 'I will write my laws on your heart.' So that every time I come to that supper I had better examine myself and be prepared for the Lord to show me what is wrong with me, and to confess my sin, because of what the promise is: he has pledged himself to write his laws on our hearts. And therefore to take that cup and then go out careless of how we behave and careless of whether we keep the laws or not, would be a denial of what we come to celebrate, would it not? The constant observation of the Lord's Supper, therefore, is an exceedingly practical thing in the question of our ongoing sanctification.

### **Is the law sin?**

I am not going to expound the final part of chapter 7 in detail here. I will just point out the significance and the logic of it. It is now saying what the function of the law is. If we are not under that old law ('the letter') but under the new law of the spirit, what are we then saying?

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? (7:7)

'Are you saying that the law is sin?'

No, no!

'Are you saying that the law is carnal and not spiritual?'

No, no, no! The law is jolly good: it is spiritual. But law, as a principle cannot produce true holiness. Law as a principle is command plus penalty that drives us to try and keep it. And Paul confesses what happens: 'With my mind', he says, 'I serve the law of God' (see v. 25).

'Yes, I can see that what the law says is a sensible way to live. I can see that intellectually, so I tell myself: "You are going to do it!" But I don't succeed. I can see it: I delight in the law

of God' says Paul (see v. 22). 'You know, when I read the law I say, "This is marvellous stuff; I'd like to live like this. I would really. It's marvellous!"'

Yes, so his intellect and his emotions agree. And then Paul says, 'I take myself in hand: "The thing I *will* to do . . .". I bring my will to bear on it. So, intellect, emotions and will all agree. I will do it! And then I break it, and the good I would do I don't do, and the evil I wouldn't do, that I do' (see vv. 15–19).

Which shows us what? It shows us that the law, though very good and necessary for various reasons and being spiritual, by itself as a law code written down on paper or on stone simply as a law code cannot bring us sanctification.

We don't speak of the law in a despising way, but we have to face what its reality is in relation to our sanctification. The only thing that will enable us to live holy lives is now described in chapter 8, and that is this ministry of the Holy Spirit under the terms of the new covenant, delivering us from the principle of sin and of death.

Now, it may be that I have not explained these things as clearly as I should, but that is a beginning anyway. You may come back with all your guns blazing, and I will give you at least five minutes in the next session to raise your profound and pointed questions.

## A taste of Romans 8

We shall have to leave until our next occasion, God willing, a few remarks on chapter 8. But one of the comforting things about that chapter is surely this—that I am not the only one responsible to see that God's program is carried out. God has a big program, for 'those that are called . . .' not 'according to *his* purpose', but 'according to purpose' (see 8:28).

You say, 'What's the difference?'

If you were inviting someone to dinner 'according to purpose', that means that you are going to invite them, and if they said yes, you had already made provision for what you would lay on: soup, of course, hors d'oeuvres and some funny things like that, and a main dish and entrees and sweets and cheese; and a nice bed, and everything else laid on, because you were inviting them on purpose, according to purpose. And so you've invited them and already prepared what you were going to do for them.

If, on the other hand, you went downtown one of these days, and there in Marks & Spencer you saw Auntie Emmalina from Canada, you might say, 'Fancy seeing you here.'

'Yes', she said, 'I took advantage of one of these cheap flights, and I thought I'd come over and see you.'

'Oh, well, yes, I'm very glad to see you. Please come home. But you see, we had the painters and decorators in, and the place is a shambles, and I've got nothing in the oven, and nothing in the pantry, and dear me, this is embarrassing.'

You invite her now, but not 'according to purpose'.

And God has invited us; he's called us 'according to purpose'. Having called us, he has a program for what to do with us. It's ultimately to be conformed to the image of his Son. And, thank God, he's not left it to us to be in final control of the fulfilling of the program, but 'the Holy Spirit witnesses that we are children of God (see vv. 15–17) and makes intercession for us according to the mind of God' (see vv. 26–27). For he knows what the necessary next step

ought to be—whether it is peace and prosperity, or whether it is some tribulation, or whatever it is that would be necessary for the next step in the program, the Holy Spirit intercedes according to the mind of God.

It's good, isn't it? The old story is true still, and the analogy is very helpful. When Abraham sent his servant to go down to find a wife for Isaac, and the girl eventually came to the decision, the family said, 'Well you'd better call her and ask her.' And he put the jewels on her, and all of that, which was a bit of diplomacy and enticement, and told her all about the master. And now the question was put by the family, 'Well, will you go with this man?' That is, would she go with Abraham's servant?

When she said, 'Yes,' the servant didn't say, 'Well, I'm delighted with your response, my dear, and I'm sure when you make your way across the desert to my master's son you won't be disappointed. We'll look forward to seeing you. Now, here is my visiting card, and when you come to our place, look us up, and you will find everything is lovely.'

No, he didn't. No, when she made her decision, Abraham's servant was in charge to lead the dear woman, and conduct her step by step, and bring her at last to his master's son.

So is the Holy Spirit given, and he intercedes for us according to the mind of God, to see that God's program is being put into action. And he calls for our cooperation, of course, as being no longer slaves but sons of God.

## Questions and Answers Session Three

### *Questions from Section Two*

#### **Question one**

*Because the Old Testament promises are for Israel, are we the spiritual Israel, as distinct from a physical Israel?*

DWG: The way I would prefer to put it, I think, is to say what Paul says in Ephesians 2:

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called ‘the uncircumcision’ by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (vv. 11–12 ESV)

This meant that, being Gentiles, the Messiah was not for them. They didn’t know anything about the Messiah. They had nothing to do with the commonwealth of Israel; they were absolute strangers to Israel as a nation. And they were strangers from the covenants of the promise, because the promises of the Old Testament to Israel were nothing to do with the Gentiles. Therefore, that being true, they had no hope, whereas Israel was marked by hope. At his trial, Paul said, he was on trial ‘for the hope of Israel’. This is Paul the evangelist talking to King Agrippa and saying he was on trial for what Israel’s hope was—that there should be a resurrection of the dead:

I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. (Acts 26:6–7 ESV)

But the Gentiles at large didn’t have this hope, and they were ‘without God in the world’.

That’s what they were. Now, through conversion in Christ, what has happened? Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:14–15. For time’s sake, notice what he says in verse 15. God has abolished all these commandments and ordinances in order ‘that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two’ (ESV). He has not added Israel to the Gentiles, or the Gentiles to Israel; he has taken some of both and made a completely new man—‘so making peace’.

For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. (vv. 18–19 ESV)

So whereas before they were strangers to the covenants of promise, they are not strangers anymore to those covenants of promise.

The new covenant was a covenant of promise. It is given in Jeremiah 31:31: 'The days will come when *I will make* a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.' So it was going to be related to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Well, what on earth have we got to do with that? Nothing, until Christ came. We were 'strangers to the covenants of promise', but now in Christ we're not, for the new covenant applies both to Jews and Gentiles, as you will see from the Lord's Supper and its very terms given in 1 Corinthians 11. The passage we read in Hebrews 8 during the last session tells us that the new covenant is already in force. Now we shall find, if God wills, in our next session, that Paul says in Romans 11, not 'I was an Israelite' but 'I *am* an Israelite' (see v. 1). And what does he deduce from that? Well, that God has not finished with Israel. In spite of Israel's rejection of Messiah, God hasn't obliterated Israel; he has left a remnant who are true believers. And if you want evidence of this present remnant of Israel, Paul says, 'I am one.' And of course there was Martha and Mary, Thomas and Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, and a good many more beside, who all were believers in Christ, and would say with Paul: 'We are Israelites. We've not become Gentiles, but we do believe in Christ, whereas the vast nation of Israel is yet hostile to Christ.'

But that same Romans 11 will tell you that God hasn't cast away his ancient people Israel, and one day Israel as a whole shall be saved (see vv. 25–29). That, put briefly, is how I understand what the New Testament is saying. And when *all Israel* is saved, of course, they will come under the terms of the covenant that those who are Israelites but believers in Christ are already under. They are now forgiven, as Hebrews points out, not on the basis of the sacrifices but on the basis of the new covenant by which their sins are forgiven already.

## Question two

*What laws are written on our hearts? Is it the Ten Commandments or the higher principles of Christian living, such as in Matthew 5?*

DWG: Well, the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament as commandments, are they not? 'Let him that stole steal no more' (Eph 4:28). 'Don't commit adultery' (see 1 Cor 6:9). 'Honour your father and mother', Ephesians quotes, and reference is made to the fact that in the Old Testament that command is followed by a promise 'that your days might be long in the land' (see Eph 6:2–3; Exod 20:12). So the Ten Commandments are repeated as commandments for believers, all except one, and that is Sabbath, of course, which is of a different order. It is sensible enough to take one day of rest in a week. It is good for psychological and physical health. That is very good. But the idea that we are to take it as a command that we must keep the Sabbath on the seventh day and worship God thereon, because it is part of the law and therefore is a moral commandment, is not quite true.

You can see that by the statement of our Lord. 'In the temple' he said, 'the priests on the Sabbath day break the Sabbath and are guiltless' (see Matt 12:5). Ponder that a moment. In the temple on the Sabbath, the priests break the Sabbath. They have to, because they have to do a lot of work (sacrificing animals was hard work) and yet they are guiltless. You try and substitute any of the other nine commandments for that: 'In the Sabbath in the temple the

priests commit adultery, and are guiltless.' That would sound a bit odd. 'On the Sabbath, the priests in the temple steal and lie and murder, and are guiltless.' Well, no, that could never be said. There is a difference between the other nine commandments and this one, is there not? We see this from the fact that on the Sabbath, in the temple, the priests break Sabbath and are guiltless.

You will not find in the New Testament any command to believers that we are to keep Sabbath. If that had been a necessary part of Christian obedience, the apostles would have had to say so, because in Greek-speaking countries they didn't even divide the month up into seven-day periods; they had a different system altogether. And many of them were slaves and were not free to cease work on a Sabbath, nor on what we call a Sunday either. Hence very often they kept the Lord's Supper at night. But if it were part of the moral commandments then, of course, the apostles would have laid it down that they must do it and be prepared to take the consequences if their employers and slave drivers disapproved.

So, are we responsible also for the principles of the Sermon on the Mount? As they apply, yes; I would have said, yes. They too are repeated throughout the New Testament. The difference is the question of whether they are treated simply as laws written in a code that we have to try and do in order to gain acceptance with God, or are they laws and principles and commandments that, so to speak, are written on our hearts because we have been born again; and the spirit of Christ who gave those laws is within us, and he empowers us to keep them? That is the question at stake. And what those basic laws written on our hearts mean when it comes to the fine detail of everyday life, then of course the Epistles talk about this. They lay down all sorts of particular rules and regulations, but as we shall see in our later sessions, God willing, they also come to the question: what are we to do where Scripture itself doesn't seem to lay down specific rules and regulations?

One such thing we shall meet in Romans is about what you should eat. Should you eat meat or just vegetables? Should you keep one day sacred above all others, or are all days alike? Where would you go for a Scripture to tell you whether you were to eat vegetables, or to tell you that you could eat meat? Some people get really worked up about this; they think these things are very basically important. What is a Christian to do in these circumstances?

Romans gives a basic principle to be observed, which I shall talk about next time, if I get the chance, for it is an exceedingly important principle. Paul says, 'In the end you must consider your weaker brother and not stumble him. And he mustn't criticize you if you are the stronger brother. You must not try to overpower him. He has a conscience, and you think there is no need for such a conscience. He won't eat anything other than vegetables; he has a conscience against eating meat for some reason. Don't overpower him, whatever you do, because there is a bigger principle at stake, which is that, in whatever we do, we are to do it unto the Lord; and we shall have to give an account of ourselves to the Lord' (see 14:1-15:3). And if the Lord comes to you and says, 'Now, my servant, on a certain day you ate meat, didn't you?'

'Yes, Lord, I did.'

'And when you ate it, you had a conscience about it, didn't you?'

'Well, yes, to be honest, I did.'

'And yet in spite of having a conscience about it, you went and ate it?'

'Yes.'

'So you did something that in your heart of hearts you thought would displease me, and yet you did it?'

'Yes.'

'Why did you do it?'

And if you were to say, 'But, Lord, it was that Gooding fellow who made me! He overpowered me. He mocked me if I didn't, and so made me do it.'

'And he made you do it even though you had a conscience, and you thought you were displeasing me? Tell me, who on earth is this Gooding fellow? Did he die for you by any chance?'

No, of course he didn't.

And in these many places where Scripture doesn't lay down any strict rule, it is not that it doesn't matter what you do. We have to be personally exercised in our conscience. So, I now propose to do this particular thing. If when I get to the judgment seat, Christ calls that into question with me: 'Why did you do that?' I need to be able to say, 'Well, Lord, I did think about it, and I felt it was okay with you to do it, and it would have pleased you. I'm sorry if I'm wrong, but I did try to think it through, and I genuinely thought it would please you.'

In those circumstances we have to think about it and come to make up our mind and get into the habit of consulting the Lord and eventually deciding on the fact: 'I've got to meet Christ over this one day. Let me think it through as best I know how. We should be able to say, 'I think this will please the Lord, so I am free to do it.' Or, we might say, 'I have a feeling that it mightn't please the Lord.' Well then, don't do it, because he died that he might be 'Lord' (see 14:9).

It's easy to look up a rule in a book, isn't it, and to keep it like a Pharisee? It is more difficult, but more valuable, to be exercised in life's ten thousand and one decisions by having to think it through, in that sense, and come to a decision in the fear of Christ, and make up our minds: 'I am going to do this because I think this is what Christ would approve of.' That very process begins to develop a character and contributes to our sanctification.

But that is a long sermon. I'll resist it!

### Question three

*If death comes to all because all have sinned (are guilty of sin) then in what sense is a person born a sinner?*

DWG: I would answer that by using an analogy. In Singapore dealing in drugs is a capital offence, and the mandatory sentence is execution. So let's suppose a woman gets caught. She is guilty; she's been dealing in drugs and is a drug taker herself. She is sentenced for execution in Singapore, but at that moment she happens to be pregnant. Now, the child is in her. Would you say the child is guilty of her sin? Would you say that when the mother sinned, the child sinned? I don't think even those who would execute her in Singapore would say that. They would give the poor woman time so that her child might be born, and then eventually the woman would be executed. They wouldn't execute the child because the child was in its mother when she sinned, when she committed the crime. That said, you will find when the



child begins to grow up it can already have withdrawal symptoms because he has been injured physically by the drugs, and the child therefore is born with a tendency to go to drugs. Of course, the child eventually knows what the law is and what the law's sentence is. If the child, knowing all that, goes on and personally engages in drug dealing, that is another story. The child is born a drug addict, in the sense he is already affected by the drugs, but he is responsible for his own deeds, and if he goes off and indulges in the drugs he will be sentenced and punished by the government.

That is a crude analogy. As I understand it, we are not condemned because 'we sinned when Adam sinned', because we were somehow 'in Adam' or belonged to his sinful race. But, because we are descended from Adam, we have inherited from him a fallen nature which leads us personally to sin, and we do sin. We are born with a fallen nature. Then in what sense is a person born a sinner? 'By one man's disobedience we were *constituted* sinners' (see 5:19), that is, through Adam's fall, all his descendants have been born with a fallen human nature. In that sense, all are basically sinners, like a tree might be an apple tree, basically, even if it never bore any apples. That is the reason, as I understand it.

### Question four

*Why is it necessary to die before I can change principles? What is it about law, or the law, that will not release a person apart from death?*

DWG: I think the answer to that is simply because of what the law is. If we are under the law and the law says, 'You have sinned there, and you must be executed', I can't just walk away and say, 'I don't like you; you're far too strict you know, and I shall now run away; and I shall take myself outside the remit of the law!' 'No you won't,' says the law. 'The law demands that you be executed. You can't just walk out of it.' I think that is what Scripture means, which seems to me to be borne out by Galatians 4. Before Christ came they were in slavery:

but when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law. (v. 4)

What for?

that he might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (v. 5)

He couldn't just come and invite folks to leave the law behind. They had sinned under it. Christ couldn't say, 'Yes, you sinned under the law, didn't you? But nowadays nobody takes any notice of the law, you know, so don't worry about that. Nothing will come of it.'

No, no. If they are to be released from the law, then the penalty must be paid. We have to be *redeemed* from the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And Hebrews 9 likewise says the same thing:

And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant . . . (v. 15)

Israel was under the first covenant and had transgressed it many times. Along comes Christ. Christ cannot say, 'Well, never mind that. I mean, that's old-fashioned stuff. Nobody takes any notice of it now. You did transgress, but never mind; don't bother about that. You come under my system; that's far better.' No; that old law was given by God, and people who transgressed it were in serious trouble and were guilty and deserved the penalty. And before they could come over to the new covenant, a sacrifice had to be offered to redeem them, to release them, to cover the transgressions that were under the first covenant. And Christ did that, of course. He paid by his blood to redeem them from the penalty of the law under that covenant, because he suffered the penalty and paid it for them.

### Question five

*What are the key distinctions between the old man and old nature?*

DWG: To answer what the old man is, let's look at the way it is used in the Epistles. Ephesians 4, for instance:

That you put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, which waxes corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth. (vv. 22–24)

The *old man* is said here to be 'your former manner of life, the old man'. And that former manner of life goes on becoming more corrupt after the lusts of deceit. It is the way you behaved and were before you were converted to Christ. It was a way of life. It wasn't merely that you did all sorts of deeds; it was that your mindset, your motivation, was that of the old man. And therefore the whole setup that was you—not interested in God, basically hostile to God, moved by ambitions that were selfish, perhaps—developed a whole lifestyle, a mental attitude, a moral attitude. It is your attitude of mind, what you were as the kind of man you were before you got converted.

With Saul of Tarsus it was a highly religious man but it was a mindset and an ambition that was absolutely hostile to Christ. Though he didn't know it, he was quite independent of God, thinking to gain salvation by his own works, which is a form of independence of God that is obnoxious to him. And it came with all the pride and conceit, and then bigotry and persecution, that went with it. That was the old man. And you saw what change was made in Paul through the death of Christ at the cross.

Then of course, from the practical side, he had to put off this old man, because there is a new life in Christ—a new man: new principles, new motives, new attitudes. It is a life based in a fear and love of God, and Christ dwelling within. In other words, the old man is not a part of us—the bad part of us, so to speak. It is the person we were before we came to Christ. And we put on the new man, though in one sense we *are* a new man in Christ. We are like a child that was born a beggar and is taken into a royal family and is now to be treated as a prince. We'll have to learn to put off the old man and the things and habits that went with being a beggar: the deceit, and this kind of thing, and put on the new man that is consistent with his new father, so to speak.

## Question six

What is 'this body of death' in Romans 7:24?

DWG: Let's read that verse.

O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?

As generally in Hebrew idiom, there is the question of what a phrase like that means linguistically. What does 'the body of this death' mean? Does it mean: 'this dead body'? An 'idol of silver' in Hebrew usage means 'a silver idol'.<sup>12</sup> Some people say, 'Yes, "body of this death" means "this dead body".' Paul felt that his old self—struggling to find perfection and salvation through keeping the law and endlessly failing and feeling the conflict within his members and the strife, so to speak, in his mind and all the rest, it was, as some people say, like being chained to a dead body. In the ancient world a punishment sometimes inflicted by the government would be for a living person to be chained to a dead body, and as the dead body went to putrefaction, of course, the experience was hideous.

Or, is it merely saying, 'Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?'; not in the sense that the physical human body is dead, but 'the body' meaning now, as we've thought before, the whole setup of a man: unsaved, unregenerate, without God, without Christ, without the Holy Spirit, trying to be good ethically and earn salvation maybe. But under that condition that kind of behaviour will lead to death. And anybody, like Saul of Tarsus or anybody else who was conscious of the holiness of God's law, will eventually come to see that in spite of all their struggles they continually fail, and this whole setup of a life built on that principle is bound to lead to death in the end. How can he get rid of that? He is desperately trying to keep the law but is always falling short. His mind, emotions and will all agree in trying to keep the law, but he finds himself falling short. Believing the law, he is therefore subject evermore to its penalties; and it is leading to death, and eventually to eternal death. 'Who shall deliver me from it?' Well, the law can't. It's the law that is part of the trouble. It's not that the law is sinful; the law is good.

Or was it that the law was good in itself, but was bad for me? The English (poor souls) were rationed during the war, and they didn't get much meat. I remember a story of one man who went to a nice, civilized, foreign land when the war was over, and he was entertained by his host and hostess and fed lavish beefsteaks. He hadn't seen such things for some years, and his system wasn't used to digesting them either, but he ate liberally. Then, unable to cope with it, he found himself being a little bit confused in the brain, and he came up with some very curious behaviour, which I won't describe now. There was nothing wrong with the beefsteaks, but in his condition it was bad to give them to him. I mean, if you get somebody nearly starving, don't push a beefsteak down his mouth; you'll kill him! It's not that there's anything wrong with beefsteaks; it's that he's not in a condition to receive it.

'And is it so,' asks Paul, 'that the law is good, but it wasn't particularly good for me, and it was stupid to give it to me?' No, it wasn't stupid to give it to me, because the law is holy and good. And what is more, I agree with it. My mind agrees with it; my emotions agree with

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<sup>12</sup> Ed. - Though writing in Greek, Paul was steeped in Hebrew idiom.

it; my will agrees with it.' We mustn't say to God, 'Don't be so foolish. I mean, after all, have common sense. It's no good telling a child of two to ride a bicycle. It's no good telling Saul of Tarsus to keep the law. I mean, you can tell Caiaphas the high priest to keep the law, if you like, but not Saul of Tarsus. That's no good for him.'

'No,' says Paul, 'it isn't that. I agree with the law, and it's good. I couldn't keep it, that's the trouble. Therefore it had to be a different principle' (see 7:7–23).

## Question seven

*What's the difference between the old man and the flesh?*

DWG: Oh that's a very good question. This is what I would want to say myself, though I'm not sitting here speaking *ex cathedra* or anything like it and nothing approaching it. I give you my own opinion for what it is worth. I'm merely stating as clearly as I can what I myself believe, but it is all open to your questions and disputing. Try all things; hold fast that which is good (1 Thess 5:21).

The *old man*, I repeat, is, in my thinking, what I described a moment ago. It is the whole system of a man before he gets converted. His basic attitude underneath is still hostility to God. He still has his pride of independence. He has his ambitions; he has his principles. And the whole set up is that of a man who is not reconciled to God. This is the old man, and coming to Christ through repentance and conversion and being born again of the Spirit changes the whole setup of the man's attitude.

Now, if you ask me what the flesh is, well, the word *flesh* in the Bible could mean all sorts of things. It can mean 'the flesh of animals', for instance; that is, what you eat. It can simply mean the flesh we are made of, the flesh covering our bones. But *flesh* takes on a deeper sense. For instance, it is in the book of the Prophet Isaiah when, rebuking Israel for going down to Egypt to help, God is protesting about this and says, 'Why do you go down to Egypt to help? The Egyptians are men and not God. Their horses are *flesh* and not spirit' (see 31:1–3). And when *flesh* is used in a bad sense in the Bible, it very frequently, as far as I understand, has that implication. It is man apart from the Holy Spirit, apart from the spirit of God. God calls that 'mere flesh'. From God's point of view, independence of God is of course foolishness indeed, because man is weak; he is merely flesh, and he is not spirit.

*Flesh* is therefore: man in independence of God, not relying on the Spirit, not relying on God, but in his own independent effort. And Paul lists the fruit of that in Galatians. 'The works of the flesh are . . .' (see 5:19–21). A man, independent of God, eventually becomes corrupt. That is why the whole business of justification by faith, which is the basis of our gospel, is so absolutely right. That man who is, like Saul was, very religious and, as far as you can tell, blameless by the law, he is obnoxious to God because he is doing it all in independence of God. 'That is the flesh,' says Paul, 'working in independence of God', as distinct from dependence on God, dependence on his Holy Spirit.

AUDIENCE: Can the believer work in the flesh and be 'carnal'?

DWG: A believer can be carnal, yes: 'fleshly' — *sarkos* or *sarkinos*. We can act in independence of the Lord if we are not careful. Witness 1 Corinthians: 'Are you not yet fleshly when one

says, "I am of Paul"; "I am of Apollos"; "I am of Cephas", and you make divisions in the church, and then you all fall out and are against each other?" (see 3:1–4). That kind of thing, even in the church, says Paul, is 'fleshly'. That is acting as mere men in the flesh, not dependent on the spirit of God, and in contrast to God's directions.

### Question eight

*Is the experience of Paul in Romans 7 previous to his conversion, or is it after his conversion?*

DWG: Well, that is a very interesting question and is much debated. Some people will say, 'This is very much my own experience as a believer.' Others will say, 'How can a believer talk like that? Does he know nothing of the liberating power of the Holy Spirit?' And so some say this is Paul before he got converted; and others say, 'No, he couldn't have experienced this after he got converted.'

If I may, I will make a third suggestion, which is neither one nor the other. Consider the context in which it comes. Paul is discussing sanctification, and what purpose the law, as law, has to contribute to the process of sanctification. And he is making this point. Are we saying that the law is sinful when we say that you cannot in that sense be sanctified by the law? We are not saying it is sinful, but look at its inadequacy, as Paul sums it up in chapter 8, 'what the law *could not do*, in that it was weak through the flesh' (v. 3). God has interposed to do something that the law could not do, and therefore, though we may all from time to time feel the way that Paul describes in Romans 7 onwards, we ought to go beyond it to see that we are not under law in that sense, but we are married to another (see v. 4). We are not under the old covenant, with us desperately trying to keep law in our own strength. We are married to another; we are under the new covenant, and we have the Holy Spirit within. That is the difference of principle.

And it would be odd if a believer would say now, after fifty years, 'I don't know what you're talking about when you talk about the power of the Holy Spirit. I don't know what that is. What on earth is this new covenant, and what does it do, and what is it supposed to do?' Surely, we know something of what the new covenant is about, not only in forgiveness, but in the reality of the Holy Spirit within our hearts. Yes, we have to practice. Yes, we have to learn how to take advantage of the Holy Spirit's presence and power. Yes, surely; but I don't think that Romans 7:7 onwards is meant to be the norm of Christian behaviour—always struggling and always defeated. We are, after all, under the new covenant: 'sin shall not have dominion over you because you are not under law' (6:14). We are being empowered by the Holy Spirit and should know increasingly in practical experience the gracious help of the Holy Spirit. Not that we are perfectly sinless, of course not.

I personally feel, and that is why I spent some time on it today, that this difference between the law on tables of stone as a rulebook, and the new covenant with its laws written on the heart, is very important. If you keep the Lord's Supper weekly, as many of you do, it would be a pity not to remember from time to time that that is a celebration of the new covenant, which is this matter, first and foremost, of writing God's laws on our hearts. So when I take the cup I am saying, 'Yes, Lord, certainly I thank you for dying for me that my sins shall be forgiven and not remembered against me anymore. Lord, this last week I have not done what

I should have done. I confess it, Lord. Thank you for your forgiveness, and thank you for this promise. It is your promise. You have promised that you will write your laws on my heart. Lord, write them ever more deeply.' Because, in the end it is not my determination, merely, and trying to behave; it is the pledge of what he does: 'I will write my laws on your heart.'

Therefore when we come we are to discern ourselves. You see, I must know now by experience that not all of my attitudes, at my age, are necessarily right. My friends know it more than I do, of course, and can see it. It is not a question merely of discerning what I've done wrong, but of discerning *attitudes* that are wrong. I need to do it, for to come to the symbol of the new covenant and not see any need to discern myself, and where my attitudes are wrong that they be corrected, well then, I'm neglecting what is one of the major things of the new covenant. But even when I confess my sin and see that my attitudes are wrong, and I've got wrong habits and things, and I confess that too, then, oh, the marvellous, positive side as I take that cup! I can come. I don't have to stay away. I can come in that spirit therefore, and claim the promise pledged to me by the cup of the new covenant: 'I will write my laws on your heart.' He does it! And this is magnificent gospel!

And what happens if I become careless and don't discern myself? If I do that, it is after all a covenant, and it is the Lord who covenants it, not me. I didn't initiate the covenant. It is he that does the covenanting. If I don't cooperate with him, then he will fulfil his covenant: he'll write his laws on my heart. He'll do it in a way that is happy and convenient; but if not, if I'm careless and I am a believer, he *is* going to write them. So we are judged of the Lord and chastened, so 'that we are not condemned with the world' (1 Cor 11:32), for he is covenanted to do it. And he will do it now, and we are chastened of the Lord so that we shall not be condemned with the world. A believer will never be condemned with the world, but if he's careless in this life and doesn't, in that sense, cooperate with the Lord, the Lord will take him in hand, because the Lord is covenanted to do it. It is marvellous, isn't it? Or perhaps you don't think so. But to me it is gospel!

## The Failure of Israel's Faith and Service

### *An Overview of Romans 9–11*

#### Our studies so far

Let's begin by reminding ourselves of the major thing that we have learned about Romans — that it consists of four major parts. It is as we learn to distinguish what each part is particularly about that we begin to get a full, four-dimensional view of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. 1:1–5:11	2. 5:12–8:39	3. 9:1–11:36	4. 12:1–16:27
WRATH OF GOD	WRECKAGE OF ADAM'S SIN	FAILURE OF ISRAEL'S FAITH AND SERVICE	APPEAL FOR OUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE
Righteousness apart from the law	Righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in us	Christ is the end of the law for righteousness	Love is the fulfilment of the law
Christ died for us	We died with Christ	Jew/Gentile relations	Jew/Gentile relations
WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD	SAVED IN HOPE	ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED	NOW IS OUR SALVATION NEARER
Hope of the glory of God	Them he also glorified . . . creation delivered	'Life from the dead'	'The day is at hand', 'Satan bruised'
THE LOVE OF GOD (5:5–11)	THE LOVE OF GOD (8:35–39)	THE WISDOM OF GOD (11:33–36)	THE ONLY WISE GOD (16:27)

#### *Section one*

The first part gives us the first reason why people need to be saved, and that is because we stand under the wrath and indignation of God. That is the first reason given in Romans why we need to be saved. Having noticed that, we observed how suited that topic is to what now follows in the first great part of Romans. As we are told about the death of Christ, we are told that he died *for us* as our substitute. He died to bear the penalty of our sins and thus for our sakes to bear the wrath of God against our sins.

We noticed too that the death of Christ is described in this first part, in chapter 3, as the *propitiation* for our sins. And we noticed that the term *propitiation* deals with that aspect of the death of Christ by which his death satisfied the wrath of God against sin. To use the old word, it *appeases* God: his wrath having been provoked by our sin. Christ died *for us*, then. He died as the propitiation, and that term is used with great accuracy and deliberation. Being used of the death of Christ, it is *the* term that signifies that his death satisfies the wrath of God against our sin.

We noticed then that when the first part comes to its climax and conclusion in the first eleven verses of chapter 5, the glorious statement is made triumphally, because of Christ dying for us: 'we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him' (v. 9). And we noticed that Paul hasn't wandered (like some of us preachers do) from the major theme and gone all over the place. Some of us seem to start out going to France and end up with the Eskimos, and then we find ourselves in Africa, and then come around to France at the end. He is not doing that kind of thing. He is following a deliberate theme all the way through to the end, and comes to its climax: 'we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him'.

At that climax we meet for the first time the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Chapter 5 tells us that 'the love of God is poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom God has given to us' (see v. 5). It is not our love for God. It is not said here that the Holy Spirit helps us to love God. It is that the Holy Spirit takes the love of God, like somebody might take a pitcher of water, and pours it out in our hearts. So it begins to trickle down through our conscious mind, and our unconscious mind, and our spirits answer to it. It is the love of God for us, poured out into our hearts, which assures us that, if we have once been justified by faith, we most certainly shall be in the future saved from the wrath of God. It assures us that if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the *death* of his Son, which death must have caused him infinite grief, we shall be saved by his *life*, which causes God eternal pleasure.

So here is the Holy Spirit coming to the conclusion of this first part of Romans. We once stood under the wrath of God. Now we are reconciled—forgiven through the propitiatory death of Christ. And now the Holy Spirit argues that God, who loved us so much as to give his Son for us, is consistent in his character. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, we can be much surer that we shall be saved through him. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is arguing the case logically from the character and love of God who gave his Son to die for us, to satisfy God's own wrath against our sin. And here is God's Holy Spirit telling us that God is so completely satisfied with our Lord's sacrifice that we most certainly shall be saved from the wrath of God, through him. We *shall be* saved. So we noticed that argument coming right down to its conclusion.

### *Section two*

Then in more recent sessions we looked at the second major part of Romans, and we noticed what it is concerned with now. Of course it is concerned with the death of Christ for us; it is concerned for our salvation, but here it is with a particular part of our salvation. It is not now that Christ died for us to deliver us from the wrath of God. We are now dealing with another part—the wreckage caused by Adam's sin. By one man's disobedience, 'sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so death passed upon all men' (see 5:12). This is the sad wreckage of



Adam's disobedience. So that we are born as sinners, lost and ruined by the fall. We are constituted sinners in our very nature; we come of a fallen race.

Now it is a question of our sanctification: our redemption, the putting right of the wreckage. That is a different thing from the emphasis of the first section: deliverance from the wrath of God. This is now concerned with putting right the wreckage. Because it would be marvellous to be saved from the wrath of God because Christ died for us, but if that was all salvation was about, what a sad business it would be to have us forgiven and remain the wrecks that we used to be. There must be this second side to salvation that is concerned with putting right the wreckage. And we can see that this is what it is about if we come to the climax of this part two, where it points out that even creation itself, not us merely as individuals but creation itself, has been subjected to vanity, to frustration. Nature has never realized what originally it was designed to realize. It is in bondage to corruption; it is experiencing the pains of childbirth, says Paul. What will emerge one day, of course, is a creation that is delivered from its bondage to corruption and from frustration into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Therefore creation is waiting for you and me (see 8:18–22). The first caretaker of creation was Adam. He was made to have dominion. He failed and brought in wreckage. Why doesn't God immediately release creation? Because he is waiting for people who are trained, sanctified and glorified and able to take over the administration of creation, and indeed of the universe, with Christ. Hence this present time, and the seriousness and the importance and the wonder of the way God has designed to put right the wreckage in us that Adam caused, and to bring us to that state of glory where we shall be competent to take over a restored creation with Christ.

So when we come to the climax here in the second great part of Romans, it is not merely that we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him, as in part one (notice that future tense in part one: 'We *shall be* saved from the wrath of God . . .' (5:9)); but here there is much more. We are going to be conformed to the image of God's Son (8:29). The wreckage will be more than put right.

And here as we summarize these things, let me stress the special emphasis on the Holy Spirit at the end of this great part two. 'It is the spirit of life in Christ Jesus', says Paul in chapter 8, who delivers us 'from the law of sin and death' (v. 2). It is not our own struggles to keep that law and avoid its penalties, but the spirit of life—a new life put within us by the Holy Spirit. It is 'the spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. That same Spirit is said in that same chapter to guide us; and there it is not merely saying that at the Lord's Supper you have to wait until the Lord's Spirit guides you to give out a hymn or to say something or other. It isn't talking about that. It is talking of the Holy Spirit's guidance of us in our day to day lives, activities and practices. It is the voice that witnesses within: 'Don't do that. That's not fitting for a child of God. That won't do. You'd better start repenting about that attitude.' This is the Spirit guiding us, not now simply by a set of rules, but by his own gracious and holy presence and the power of this new life within.

#### *The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus (Rom 8)*

Notice then the contrast between that first part and this second when it comes to our relationship with the law. The first part emphasized the fact that we are justified by faith

without the deeds of the law. The second part reminds us that while we are justified apart from the works of the law, it is God's intention and goal that the righteousness of the law shall be fulfilled in us (see v. 4). This contradicts the notion that, because we are justified by faith and therefore shall not come into judgment, we are free to carry on and it doesn't really matter if we sin because, after all, we are going to be saved from the wrath, so it doesn't really matter how we behave in business or in the family. The whole purpose of our salvation is that the righteous demand of the law shall be fulfilled in us. Notice how we are to walk, not in the strength of our own power and resolve, but to walk and live by the gracious power of the Holy Spirit within us.

But do notice what is said about the righteous requirement of the law being fulfilled in the power of the Spirit who lives within us is in this second part of Romans; it is not in the first part. In our preaching of the gospel it is important that we understand it, even if our congregations don't. It is okay to talk to the man who is immoral or drunken or this, that and the other, and say that, 'If you trust Christ he'll help you to lead a better life'. Well, that's perfectly true, and sometimes appropriate to say; but we who ought to know our gospel well, and to know what dosage to give to what patients, so to speak (forgive the analogy), we should know the difference. What this man needs is to be saved from the wrath of God; that is number one. And there it isn't a question of his improvement.

Lots of folks imagine that it is that way. They imagine that, God has given us his Son, and here we are, wrecks, but Christ is the good mechanic, and he is helping to put us right. Of course we can't yet say whether we shall pass muster at the end. When the great engineer comes to look at our lives he might not be satisfied, but we hope Christ will have helped us to do as good a job as we possibly can so that even God couldn't find too much fault with us, and so he ought to let us through.

That is a damnable heresy, that is. Christ hasn't come to help people to improve their lives so that by the time the final judgment comes, well, if they're not one hundred percent they might be yet ninety percent anyway, or at least seventy-five percent. Or, if God is as kind as university professors, then with forty percent he'll let them through. That isn't the gospel, and sooner or later we need to make the gospel clear, that when it becomes a question of being saved from the wrath of God and knowing ourselves accepted it is, as the hymn puts it: 'Just as I am, without one plea, | but that thy blood was shed for me'.<sup>13</sup> As I stand in all my wreckage under the wrath of God, the first thing I need is, not to put the wreckage right; the first thing I need is to be reconciled to God, which I can be through the death of Christ. And as I stand in my wreckage, I know I shall not come into condemnation. Why? It is because Christ died *for me* as the propitiation. That is first.

The second section of Romans is the other side of the matter. Yes, Christ has come to put right the wreckage. That is the second bit. And here it is that the righteousness of the law — its righteous demand — 'shall be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (v. 4). But here again we notice the aspect of salvation. It is not that, 'Well, now you are forgiven. You are certain that you shall not come into condemnation. You are free and you shall not suffer the wrath of God. So, now do your best to be a good Christian.'

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Barnby (1838-1896), 'Just as I am, Without One Plea' (1883).

It isn't that. That's only half the gospel. The gospel is, 'Now you are saved. You shall not come into condemnation. You shall never experience the wrath of God. What is more, you don't merely have to try your best to be good. God has given us (and this is the miracle of his grace) his Holy Spirit within as a free gift, and not merely as a power but as a person to live within us—a new life. What is more, the Holy Spirit has in view God's purpose for us; and God's purpose is spelled out in Romans 8: 'whom he called, those he justified; and whom he justified, those also he glorified' (see v. 30).

In what sense *glorify*? It is God's intention that we shall be conformed to the image of his Son. We, of course, on our side, are to keep that objective in view and aim at it, as Paul says, 'That I might know [Christ], and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings' (Phil 3:10). But we are not left to our own in that aim, for we are told that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. And we ourselves are so mixed up and so short sighted, and we don't really know what is for our best very often, that if it were left to us and to our prayers the result might be less than adequate.

What shall I pray for? Would you happen to know? I'm talking about me now. What do I need next? Do I need a period of sunshine and success and a feeling of progress, which leads me to say I'm getting better every day? Is that what I need? Or do I really need now a period of testing and trial and difficulty and pain? If I am to be moved forward and be released from the old set habits and ideas and be led on to some bigger things, what would I need exactly? Do you happen to know? I don't! But, thank God, we have the Holy Spirit within who makes intercession for us 'according to God', and interprets our own prayers, and moves us in our prayers according to the great purpose that God has in view (see vv. 26–27).

It is like the servant that Abraham sent to get a bride for Isaac. When the dear lady said, 'Yes, I'm prepared, and I want to go,' the servant didn't just leave her and say, 'Well, do your best to come across, and this is the address of our tent, and you'll find us when you come, and that's where it will be. You'll be sure of a welcome, but turn up when you can.' No, no, the servant had camels and guided the dear lady all the way on the long journey, until he presented her to Isaac, his master's son. So does the Holy Spirit.

This is gospel! This is glorious gospel, and we need to get hold of it because our natural temperament very often is this: being assured that we shall not come into judgment, that we shall be saved from the wrath of God, often we fall back into just trying to do the best we can, and we become legalists: keeping rules, instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to develop his new life. Of course, that new life will, with God's help and guidance, lead to the righteous requirement of the law being fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. These, therefore, are very important things, are they not?

And we saw previously how, while the objective is that we keep the righteous requirement of the law, we do so, not under the terms of the old covenant—merely a set of rules graven on stone (holy and important as they were) but under the terms of the new covenant in which the Holy Spirit writes those laws on our very hearts.

This passage too, the second great part of Romans, ends with a triumphant climax. You notice the emphasis of the Holy Spirit that we have just been mentioning, and now finally the absolute assurance of salvation once more, based this time on the character of God and the love of God (8:31–39). As it was in chapter 5, so it is here. And we are taught to argue that 'he

that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?' (v. 32). Paul doesn't then say, 'And because of that we know that God will shelter us and save us from tribulation, anguish, peril and sword.' No, indeed not! Paul, in his life, experienced endless tribulation, persecution, hunger, imprisonment and so forth. We are not saved from those things. We are saved in them, in this confidence that neither things present nor things to come shall 'separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (v. 39).

None of us have travelled very far yet. We have got a lot of travelling to do, haven't we? Where do you suppose heaven is? Wherever, however far we have to travel, both now and eternally, we may know this; that nothing in God's created universe, here or elsewhere, material, physical or spirit powers, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and therefore we are more than conquerors (see vv. 37–39).

#### *We died with Christ*

What we have been trying to do, I repeat, is not to play crossword puzzles with the word of God, but to understand the different aspects of our salvation, and how carefully they are delineated here in Paul's letter. So, to have one final contrast, in part one where it was a question of Christ saving us from the wrath of God, the expression is that Christ died for us. He died for the ungodly. Here, in part 2, it is not so much that Christ died for us, but that we died with him and were raised with him. He thus delivers us from the bondage of sin and of death and of the law. We rise in our baptism to walk in newness of life, that is, in the realities of the new life given to us by the spirit of God.

Now we must move on to the third major section.

## **Section three: Romans 9–11**

### **The place of its themes in the book**

The failure of Israel's faith and service now becomes the major theme of part three. And the question is: why is that mentioned? Space in the book of Romans is at a premium, like building sites now are in Belfast. You therefore have to account for anything that is in Romans. Why on earth is that here? It is not always apparent to those who preach the gospel why three whole chapters should be spent on Israel. What's that got to do with the gospel of justification by faith or sanctification in Christ? Why is it here? Well, for two reasons quite clearly.

#### *Reason one: The nation through whom Messiah came, rejected Jesus as the Messiah*

Our gospel, so chapter 1 tells us, is based on the Old Testament prophets. The gospel is not a philosophy thought up by Paul or anybody else. It is the full flowering of a historical process. Long before the coming of our Lord, God was inspiring a whole succession of prophets to prophesy what the Messiah would do when he came. More than that, God was spending centuries before Christ came, laying down the moral law. How shall people know what grievous sinners they are unless God reveals his law to them? And God also spent centuries protesting through Israel against all idolatrous interpretations of the universe, for the ancient nations had fallen into idolatry instead of worshiping the Creator. Romans 1 says they

'worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator' (see v. 25). It's not only that they worshiped beetles or cows or crocodiles or elephants or other things, though some in our world still do. In India, for instance, they have the elephant God, don't they? That's a very curious god. But people deified the powers, the forces, of nature. So they deified the sun and made it into a god, and they deified the moon and made that into a god, and the stars. They deified the forces of fertility and reproduction. The god Baal was the god of fertility, sometimes worshiped in the form of a bull, because of a bull's prodigious fertility. And then they worshiped the storm—the tsunamis and all the rest of it. And incidentally, if you are talking to materialist atheists, do it very respectfully and gently, but suggest to them that they are old idolaters, just as bad as the ancients were. The materialist atheist, of course, doesn't have a few gods lined up in his lounge. No, but ask him, 'What are the ultimate forces in the universe that control everything, us included?' The modern atheist will reply just like the ancients replied, only with more sophistication. He'll say, 'The ultimate forces that control us are the weak atomic power, the strong atomic power, electromagnetism, gravity and the forces of biology. They are the ultimate powers.' In other words, he is taking the powers of nature and, important as they are, now making them the ultimate that controls everything. That is idolatry, and when taken to its logical conclusion it will reap eventually the inevitable results that Romans 1 talks about.

God raised up Israel as a protest against idolatry, and as a witness to the one true God. What use would it have been for God to send his Son into the world proclaiming: 'This is the Son of God', if people didn't know what the term *God* meant, or who thought, like the Greeks, of thousands of gods, all with sons and daughters? God spent centuries, therefore, witnessing through Israel to the futility and absurdity of all idolatrous interpretations of the universe. Israel failed on many an occasion, of course. And to cure them of their tendency to idolatry themselves, he had to send the whole nation off—the ten tribes to Assyria and the two tribes to Babylon. In the mercies of God, that cured some of them, so that when Ezra and Nehemiah brought the people back from Babylon and rebuilt the temple, thereafter as far as the Jews were concerned, there were no more idols.

There was a period under Antiochus Epiphanes when an idol was erected in the court of the temple by the foreign emperor, which was 'the abomination of desolation', as Daniel describes it (see ch. 9), to which our Lord referred as a prototype of what shall be at the end stage (see Matt 24). At the end stage, the world will be marked by a dictator who sits in the temple of God, 'showing himself that he is God' (see 2 Thess 2:4). Notice that description. This is the full flowering of idolatry, the full flowering of the devil's lie to Adam and Eve: 'You shall be as God' (Gen 3:5). It is man aping God. But apart from that brief period under the Seleucid kings, there were no idols in the temple.

And when our Lord came to the temple at Jerusalem, yes, he had to turn out the money-changers (they'd perverted it to the business of making money), but there were no idols there. God sent his Son 'in the fullness of time' (Gal 4:4) when Israel had learned not to compromise with idolatry, so that when our blessed Lord claimed to be the Son of God it should be interpreted as to the reality it is and not in a compromise with the idolatrous notion of the pagans around.

It is part of your basic apologetics to this world to observe these things. For you will be told by cynics: 'You Christians, well, you create God in your own image, of course. You think of him as a super-duper man.' And then they will add (thinking themselves very modern, but repeating an ancient notion among the Greeks): 'If the elephants got around to thinking about God they would conceive of God as a very big elephant. And all your ideas of God are anthropomorphic. You yourselves have invented them, anyway. How do you know that the idea of God isn't your own human invention?'

We need to know what exactly is meant when the Bible talks about the Son of God. This is where our history becomes exceedingly important—the history of all those preparatory years when God was training Israel to get hold of this notion of the one true God, creator of heaven and earth, as distinct from all idolatrous interpretations into which the rest of the nations had fallen.

So one reason why the great discussion goes on to discuss Israel's failure in chapters 9–11 is because it was Israel to whom and through whom the Old Testament revelation of God was given. It was Israel who was marked out by God's prophets as being the nation through whom the Messiah would come. By Paul's day, the majority in Israel, and certainly the establishment, had rejected Jesus as the Christ. And to this day the majority of Jews still reject him. We need to know why, don't we? For if the nation appointed by God to introduce Christ rejects Jesus as the Christ, how can we Gentiles believe he is the Christ?

*Reason two: The plan of God has not failed*

There is a second reason why Paul must discuss it. God created the universe, the world, and said it was very good. The thing was wrecked through Adam's sin. All right, but the call of Abraham out of the nations was now one tremendous example of God's work. In one sense it was the beginning of God's great plan of redemption to put right what Adam had put wrong. Well, if that was what it was, then it was bad enough if Adam went wrong, but if now one of the major parts of God's scheme of redemption has gone wrong, where does that leave us in our preaching of the gospel?

You say, 'I don't know what you're getting at—this business of Israel being a part of God's redemption.'

Oh? Now let me do a little cross examination, if I may. You believe you are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, yes? I see. What does that mean?

'Well,' you say, 'at the Passover . . .'

Oh, you're going to talk about the Passover, as though that were some example of the death of Christ and of how you are saved? Was it just you who thought up that analogy?

'No,' you say, 'it's in the Bible. It's in the Old Testament.'

And was that a sort of happy accident that it's in the Bible?

'No,' you say, 'the thing is inspired . . .'

I see, the thing is inspired. And you hold, do you, that all of that with Abraham, and then with Moses, and then the redemption out of Israel was deliberately designed by God as a part of his great scheme of redemption? Oh, I see. And what if the modern rabbi should tell you that this is a lot of nonsense, and that Jesus isn't the Lamb of God?

And if the nation that God raised up to be the great preparatory way of redemption has gone wrong, then what hope is there for our redemption anyway?

We cannot just dismiss the history of Judaism, therefore, as though it didn't really matter and we can get on in Christianity even if Judaism is a complete ruination. That means that we must give serious attention to God's original purpose in raising up Israel.

## The argument of Romans 9

So we come to the argument of Romans 9.<sup>14</sup>

<b>1. The grievous state of the majority of Paul's kinsmen-according-to-the-flesh in Paul's day</b>	<b>9:1-3</b>
<b>2. The majesty and effectiveness of the unique role given by God's sovereign choice to Israel, the nation physically descended from Abraham</b>	<b>9:4-5</b>
a. The adoption as sons: cf. Deuteronomy 32:19-20.	
b. The glory: i.e. the presence of God.	
c. The covenants (Gen 15:17; Exod 24:7-8; Jer 31:31-34).	
d. The giving of the law.	
e. The service of God.	
f. The promises.	
g. The fathers.	
h. The nation through which the Messiah should come physically; who is simultaneously 'over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.'	

Let's read the first five verses of that chapter.

I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Ghost, that I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen. (vv. 1-5)

### The grievous state of the majority of Paul's fellow Jews

First of all we read of Paul's grief, his sorrow of heart, over the grievous state of the majority of Paul's kinsmen according to the flesh, that is, the literal, physical nation of Israel. Notice the phrase, 'my kinsmen according to the flesh.' He is talking about physical Israelites — Israel is a nation, a political entity. He has great grief of heart for them.

<sup>14</sup> See the appendixes for the full notes summarizing the arguments of chapters 9-11.

## The unique role given by God's sovereign choice to Israel

Now he tells you the original wonder of the role that God gave to Israel. We do well to digest the role given to the physical nation of Israel as a political entity.

### *The adoption as sons*

The phrase 'whose is the adoption . . .' is old English of course for, 'placing as sons'.

You say, 'Wait a minute, Paul. You're not telling us that Israelites were sons of God, are you? I thought we were the sons of God because we've been born again? What do you mean that they were placed as sons?'

Well, yes, if you doubt that you'd better read Deuteronomy, where God bewails the behaviour of his 'sons' and comes near to repudiating them (see 32:19). You may well argue that the use of the word 'son' carries various connotations and doesn't mean with Israel what it would mean in all its fullness in New Testament times. But notice it does denote a relationship. And Israel were God's sons in the sense in which the Gentiles were not.

### *The glory*

Paul says, 'whose is the adoption, and the *glory* . . .'. We must not belittle the terms. When the tabernacle was built, the very *shekinah* glory of God descended on it. When Solomon built the temple, the *shekinah* glory of God so filled the place that the priests couldn't stand it and had to get out. This is not fable; this was utter reality that the God of heaven, in some sense, presenced himself among ancient Israel in the tabernacle and then in the temple. I know you will tell me that according to Ezekiel there came the time Ezekiel witnessed when the glory departed from the temple. That doesn't undermine but simply stresses the fact that, originally, the glory of God was in the tabernacle and the temple. This was God making himself known there in protest to all the idolatry of the surrounding nations.

Some of the surrounding nations were exceedingly sophisticated. Witness the ancient Babylonians, with Hammurabi and all the rest, thousands of years before Moses. And witness the Assyrians, with their art and architecture; and the Babylonians; not to talk of the Greeks and then the Romans. Compared with those, that simple pastoral nation seemed a nonentity to many. But it is the statement of Scripture and our Christian belief that, whereas Israel may not have been anywhere near so sophisticated as other great empires, they are marked by this reality.

The Old Testament still stands unique; and the notion that monotheism is the result of evolution is sheer historical nonsense. I know it is taught. People like to think that just as there were physical evolutions, so when it came to theology, theology evolved. You started off by animism: worshiping the spirits in the trees and in the buffaloes, and in your grandparents and things like that. And then from animism you evolved to polytheism by various stages. Polytheism means many gods. Then you evolved a bit further to henotheism: one god per nation, though a different god each time, of course. And then you evolved beyond that to monotheism: the notion that there is one god in the whole universe. And beyond that, if you've any sense, you'll evolve further to atheism.

That's a lot of nonsense, that is. And the evidence is there in your Old Testament, where it is pointed out that Israel began as a protest against the idolatry, to worship the one true God. You might say, 'They invented the idea', but they didn't. They were always



compromising it, sliding away from it—going and behaving like the Gentiles, and they had to be dragged back by the roots of their hair by a whole succession of prophets. Israel did not invent the idea of monotheism: witness their own history. Where did they get it from? Well, the Bible's answer is that God revealed himself, 'the God of glory appeared to Abraham' when he dwelt among old idolaters and brought him out (see Acts 7:2). Israel was to be a testimony to the one true God.

#### *The covenants*

Then there was the covenants. Consider the covenant at Sinai and the moral nature of that covenant. Don't overlook it, because the gods of many idolatrous nations had to be kept up in the style they were accustomed to, of course, with endless sacrifices. And if you wanted your gods to behave and be on your side against the enemy, you helped them in that regard with endless sacrifices and special sacrifices. Morals had very little to do with religion in the ancient world. If you wanted to know about morality in ancient Greece, for instance, you wouldn't have gone to the temple and the priests, you'd have gone to the philosophers. And when religion and ritualism really gets hold of people, you will find the same phenomenon under the skin. You find that ritualism is a way of keeping God on your side, and religion very often has little to do with morality. In Israel it was different. Do notice the moral conditions in the covenant of God with Moses at Sinai. Of course there was ritual as well.

#### *The giving of the law and the service of God*

There was the giving of the law. Then there was the service of God. That was a tremendous witness. In the good days (not when Israel were slipping and compromising and all the rest of it) you came to Israel's tabernacle, and later the temple, and there was no image of God inside it to start with, which was distinctly odd compared with other nations. There were no child sacrifices as with the Moabites and those who worshiped the god Moloch, slaughtering their babes and children to appease a supposedly angry god. Indeed, you'll find in the prophets, and in the historical books, God's tremendous protests against 'passing your children through the fire', which means sacrificing them to the pagan god Moloch (see Lev 18:21; Jer 32:35). And in the tabernacle and temple, except in the days of Hophni and Phineas (those couple of rogues), there were no temple prostitutes. Whereas in many pagan religions, religion got all mixed up with temple prostitutes.

I remember years ago being on a tour in Greece, and we were taken to Corinth, and to old Corinth. There we stood in what was originally the *agora*—the marketplace, and the Greek guide pointed out this heap of stones. She said, 'That was the speakers' platform. And, you know, St Paul would have stood on there to address the crowd.' And turning around rather dramatically she turned to the great hill behind, which is Acrocorinth, with the remains of a temple on it. She said, 'There was a temple up there to Aphrodite with a thousand priestesses: open to all comers.' This was in the cause of religion, if you please. It was the deifying of sex; and our modern world gets very near it. The guide said, 'I think St Paul had a hard time when he came to Corinth.'

I thought so too, and I went behind one of the other ruins and got out my Bible and read it. The tremendous courage of the man—to dare to come to a sophisticated city like Corinth (which would make Belfast look like a slum) with its marble paved main road and its statues

and its pillars and its wealth, its tradition of education, and its sophisticated vice. He would say to his converts later on as he wrote to them of the kinds of immoral people they had been, 'and such were some of you' (see 1 Cor 6:11).

In its better days, and certainly in the time of our Lord, Israel was cured of idolatry; there were no temple prostitutes in the temple.

### *The promises and the fathers*

Then of course there were 'the promises'. And there were 'the fathers' who prophesied of the coming of the Messiah, 'of whom is Christ, according to the flesh'. And Paul, hastening to add a tribute to Christ's deity adds, 'who is over all, God blessed forever' (v. 5). Christ is God, blessed forever. And he came through the Jews, did he not? Because of their testimony they had an impact, limited maybe, but they certainly had an impact.

You remember the story in the Acts of the Apostles about the Ethiopian Chancellor of the Exchequer who had come up to Jerusalem to worship (8:26-40). Why had he come up to Jerusalem to worship? It was because Jerusalem still stood out unique among the nations at that time. They had a temple where there was no image of a god, where they did have a law, and it was a moral law. And the priests were supposed to teach it, and the law was taught in the synagogues. And the chancellor came, and not merely as a tourist but on the way home he had bought a copy of the law, of the Old Testament. He was reading Isaiah, in fact.

Consider the value of the Scriptures given to Israel. In Acts when it mentions some of the people in the synagogues in pagan cities, you will find it more than once referring to 'the God-fearers'. They were Gentiles. Most of them were women who used to attend the synagogue. Why? It was because they saw the superiority of the Jewish Bible. They regarded it as a kind of philosophy as distinct from the nonsense of their myths about the gods and goddesses. And so it attracted people, particularly the more intelligent folks. There weren't so many men came, because if you got converted to Judaism you had to get circumcised and that, for adult men, was difficult. But women came, and even if they didn't actually become Jewesses, they so often frequented the synagogue they were called 'God-fearers'. It was from among them that many of the early Gentile converts came (see Acts 13 for instance). They were first attracted to God through the witness of the Jewish synagogue.

We do well not to forget this, lest we should be conceited in our own Gentile minds. This is the role that Israel had in God's scheme of redemption, the part he used them to play in his self-revelation in the Old Testament. That is the basis upon which our Christian gospel proceeds. And you can hear the tears in Paul's voice: 'And it's all gone wrong!' he says. And it nearly broke his heart, as it would break ours if we had any true understanding of the situation. Has it gone wrong? Has the first part of God's redemption gone astray? And you know the answer that Paul is going to give. Of course it has not gone so wrong that it is completely ruined. And why not? What evidence have you got?

Well, that we shall have to consider in our next session.

## Has God's plan for Israel Failed?

### *The Argument of Romans 9*

#### **God's word and purpose for Israel**

We take up our study in Romans 9.

But it is not as though the word of God has come to nothing. (v. 6)

Paul has just outlined in detail the majestic role that God gave to Israel in Old Testament days (vv. 1–5). He laments the present state of Israel, which gives him great sorrow and unceasing pain in his heart. Nonetheless, he positively points out in verse 6 that Israel's present state, bordering on apostasy, does not mean that the word of God has come to nothing. 'The word of God' there means, not so much the written word of God, but God's plan and his purpose—the logic behind God's redeeming calendar and purposes in the world. Among his purposes, of course, is his choice of the nation of Israel for his earlier self-revelation to Israel and thus to mankind that should lead on to the Saviour. Israel's virtual apostasy at the present *does not mean* that God's scheme, his purpose, has come to nothing.

#### **Isaiah prophesied that when God judged Israel, he would nevertheless leave a remnant (9:27–29)**

So let us just sum up what the rest of the chapters in this section are going to say about the word of God not coming to nothing. Isaiah, prophesying centuries beforehand, cries concerning Israel:

'If the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that shall be saved: for the Lord will execute his word upon the earth, finishing it and cutting it short.' And, as Isaiah has said before, 'Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had become as Sodom, and had been made like unto Gomorrah.' (9:27–29, cf. Isa 10:22–23)

In a word, when God rises up to judge (and not only to judge the nations but to judge Israel) then in the mercies of God he will leave a remnant (that is, of Israel). He will not destroy the nation of Israel completely. He chose them as a witness; he will maintain them as a witness. He will never destroy Israel completely; he will leave a remnant. In chapter 11 we shall see the relevance of that to Paul's argument that God has not cast away his people.

### There is such a remnant now (11:1-6)

In 11:1, Paul asks, 'I say then, did God cast off his people?' That question in Greek is phrased in such a way that means: 'It is not, is it, that God has cast way his people?' And the answer is, 'Certainly not!' And how would you know that? Well, Paul goes on to say: 'I also am an Israelite. He has not cast me away—I am an Israelite' (see v. 1). This Israelite was a very powerful witness to God, and he never ceased to be an Israelite. He doesn't say, 'I *was* an Israelite.' He says, 'I *am* an Israelite.' He goes on to argue on that basis.

God did not cast off his people which he foreknew. Don't you realize what the Scripture says of Elijah? How he pleaded with God against Israel, 'Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have torn down your altars: and I am left alone, and they seek my life.' What says the answer of God unto him? (vv. 2-4)

Well, the answer was, in brief: 'Don't talk nonsense, Elijah. You alone are left alive? My dear good man, recover from that pessimism forthwith, for I have left for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. You are not alone, Elijah. I know Jezebel is pretty fierce (and her lipstick is horrible). She has murdered the prophets, yes, and she is intent on getting your life, Elijah. And you've run off, haven't you? And you're feeling as though you were left alone, and the whole thing is coming unstuck. Please know this, Elijah. I have left for myself, and will leave for myself, seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal' (see v. 4; 1 Kgs 19).

There was a remnant in Elijah's day rebuking Elijah's pessimism. There is a remnant 'in that same way', says Paul—'even so then at this present time . . .'—not in the future. Well, that would be true in the future as well of course, but not just in the future but, 'even so at this present time also there is a remnant' (v. 5).

Now, you have a little logical question to ask yourself. Why would God bother to save a remnant? If he were going to destroy Israel, why didn't he do it forthwith, and destroy the whole lot and put an end to it? Why leave a remnant? Well, because the remnant is God's pledge that one day he will restore the whole lot, and that is what is plainly said in 11:26. The time is coming that '*all Israel* shall be saved'.

'All Israel' is a technical phrase in the Old Testament. It means: the nation as a whole. So, 'Israel as a whole shall be saved.' And the guarantee, the pledge of that is at this present time there is a remnant, and Paul was part of the remnant. There were others I could think of. There was a chap called Nicodemus and another called Joseph of Arimathea. And there were sundry good ladies: Martha, Mary and a good many more beside. And by this time, in many places around the Roman Empire, there were Jews who were true to God's choice of Israel who had now come to believe the Messiah—'a remnant' at this present time, says Paul.

So, Israel's witness goes on? Yes, it does. I hope that doesn't offend you in any way. Israel's witness is carrying on in the God ordained fashion. Only by a remnant, yes, but it is carrying on. And the remnant is the pledge of God that, one day, Israel as a whole shall be saved. This is the answer to the question: 'Has the plan of God come to nothing?' And the answer is: 'Most certainly not; not even for the present, let alone the future.'

It is a remnant 'according to grace'. Let's be careful not to misinterpret that. As Paul will presently expound in this very chapter, God chooses to save those Jews who will consent to be saved by grace and not by the works of the law. There were many Jews who just wouldn't bow to that, and kept on seeking salvation by the works of the law and would not accept salvation by grace, and felt they wouldn't need it. Well, of course the remnant, like Saul of Tarsus, who came to acknowledge themselves as sinners and who embraced the grace of God through Christ and his atoning death and resurrection, God chose them. They are the present Israelite witness. This is the fulfilment, thus far, of God's purpose throughout the whole of the Old Testament.

### **The gifts and calling of God regarding Israel are without repentance (11:29)**

Paul tells us that certainly God's intention has not come to nothing, 'For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance' (v. 29); that is, God has not, and will not, change his mind. If he chose Israel as a witness, he will not destroy them. He has, at the present moment, a remnant who carry on that witness. We should rejoice in this!

How many epistles of the New Testament do you know? And when you've thought about that, tell me how many of them were written by Gentiles. Think of one if you can. I have a notion in my head that most of them are written by Jews! Here also is the present witness of Jews—Israelites, true Israelites—to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

### **Therefore one day all Israel shall be saved (11:26)**

Don't believe it just because I say so. Search and see if this is in fact the argument of Romans 9, 10 and 11.

## **The argument of Romans 9**

So we come now to the detailed argument in Romans 9, and here we shall have to pause just a little brief moment to get our minds around what, for westerners, is a difficult thing.

### **Defining 'Israel'**

When Scripture uses the term *Israel*, what does it mean? Well, it can mean two things, but then they shade into each other. It can refer to the nation Israel, as distinct from every individual Israelite. There is a difference between America and Americans. If you were asked, 'What does America stand for?' you would have to listen to the present administration to know exactly what America stands for at the moment. Of course, America like that, as a nation officially led by its president, is not exactly the same thing as what every individual American thinks. So we have now to juggle those distinctions in our minds. God chose *Israel* to be a witness for him. That means the physical nation. Listen to Paul: 'my kinsmen according to the flesh' (v. 3). It was to Israel as a physical nation, a physical entity, that God gave the majestic role of being his witness in the earth. That was given to Israel. But of course within Israel there are a lot of Israelites who never were anything much more than inglorious sinners, of course. From time to time God had to deal with them, and he destroyed a number of them in many

generations. The fact that he had to destroy a good many because of their apostasies and rebellions doesn't imply that God was thereby destroying *Israel* as a nation. And so we begin to get our minds around that difference. It was to Israel as a nation, then, as distinct from all the other nations, that God gave the unique honour of witnessing in the earth to the one true God, with their temple and so forth and so on. God has not destroyed the nation and never will; but individual Israelites—that's another story. And this is a thing that we have to get into our minds now to follow Paul's argument in Romans 9.

For they are not *all Israel*, which are of Israel. (v. 6)

So there is Israel as a nation, to whom the privilege is given, but within Israel there is a distinction between some and others. Some are Israelites indeed. Remember our Lord's word when he accosted Nathanael. As he saw him coming up the road, our Lord said, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed [a real Israelite], in whom there is no guile!' (John 1:47). There were a lot of other Israelites in whom there was plenty of guile. And we think of our Lord, in conversation with those who at one stage professed to believe in him. The conversation is recorded in John 8 when they said to him, 'We are Abraham's seed'.

But he said, 'It's remarkable, gentlemen, because you're not behaving very much like Abraham. For now you seek to kill me, and Abraham didn't do that kind of thing.'

They said, 'God is our Father. We were not born of fornication.'

He said, 'Gentleman, if God were your Father you would show signs of the family relationship, wouldn't you? If God were your Father, you would love me. I know you are Abraham's seed physically, but you are not Abraham's seed spiritually. In fact, you are of your father the devil' (see vv. 33–44).

And Paul is making the same point here, but whereas the privilege was given to Israel as a whole, within Israel some were sincere Israelites. And you could rattle off the names of them, couldn't you? There was Hannah, Joshua, Caleb, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah and lots of others. There were others who nationally and ethnically were Israelites, but in their spiritual condition they were not true descendants of Abraham or Israel either.

### **Not all Abraham's physical descendants are chosen by God to carry Israel's unique witness to God (9:7–13)**

Now Paul appeals to history.

Neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but, 'In Isaac shall your seed be called.' That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed. For this is a word of promise, 'According to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.' (vv. 7–9)

He is enlarging on the notion that not all the physical descendants of Abraham are the promised seed. After all, Ishmael was a physical descendent of Abraham, wasn't he? And that is what is being quoted in these verses. Abraham, in his old age, doted on Ishmael—nice lad he was—and Abraham tried to persuade God to accept him. 'No thank you,' said God. 'He's a nice enough chap; I shall bless him.' (Do notice that: God proposed to bless Ishmael). 'But

it's not what I meant when I said I was going to give you and Sarah a son. It's not that one. I made a promise to you. You tried your very best to fulfil that promise of your own strength, didn't you, and you produced Ishmael? Thank you very much, but I don't accept that as a fulfilment of my promise. I am going to fulfil my promise, Abraham, and when I fulfil it, it will be by a direct miracle of my intervention that you and Sarah will have a son' (see Gen 17:17–22).

#### *The case of Isaac, not Ishmael*

So now let's go back to the basic principle. God started with Abraham to build a nation; he called Abraham. On what principle did God choose from among Abraham's descendants one of those descendants to be the channel of the building of the nation? And the answer is: 'not through human effort'. It wasn't that Abraham said to himself one day, 'This is marvellous. I have a hint from God that he's going to do marvellous things for me, and I'm going to be unique. Now, let me have a son, and I'll get him well educated, and I'll put him forward, and he'll be the leading chap of his day, and I shall take the credit for it.'

No, no; it isn't even by Abraham's ambition and efforts. The raising up of Abraham's seed as the nation that would have this function for God in the world was God's own initiative. It was through a miraculous intervention in his parents so that this was a work of God, not of human ambition. In that sense, Abraham could not take any credit for it.

#### *The case of Jacob and Esau*

Again, see the principle involved in choosing the descendants of Abraham to be the seed, the nation and the witness to God in the next pair, says Paul.

And not only so; but Rebecca also having conceived by one, even by our father Isaac—for the children being not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calls, it was said unto her, 'The elder shall serve the younger.' (9:10–12)

So this is another fork in the road as we ask how the nation came to be. The first fork concentrates first of all on the parents—Abraham and Sarah. It wasn't their initiative. It wasn't their ambition. It was not brought about by their power. This is God talking about the parents that began the rise of the nation. It was by God's direct initiative.

Now you turn to Isaac's children, and they were twins. God accepted the second one, which was Jacob, to become Israel eventually—the father of the twelve sons that should be the core of the nation's existence. He chose Jacob and not Esau. On what ground did God choose Jacob and not Esau?

You would say, 'Well, I mean, Jacob wasn't perfect. Goodness, everybody knows that! But perhaps he was a bit better than Esau? That's why God chose him.'

Certainly not. It was while the children were 'not yet born, neither having done anything good or bad', that God's electing purpose might stand. For now, do perceive it very clearly, Paul isn't talking (and God isn't talking) about salvation or forgiveness of sins. He is talking about God's choice of a particular nation to be the witness for God in the earth. That is the choice. The fact he chose Jacob and not Esau does not mean that when he chose Abraham,

Isaac and Jacob that then all the rest of the world were consigned to eternal perdition because he chose them for salvation and not the others. That would be untrue to Scripture itself. There were Gentiles who got converted. I can think of one of them, the Queen of Sheba, to start with. What God chose Jacob for, as he chose Abraham and Isaac, was for this unique privilege of being God's witness in the earth.

On what ground did he choose Jacob, therefore, for that purpose? Well, not on the ground of his works—good or bad. Did I hear you mutter, 'If I'd have been God, I'd have foreseen what a rogue old Jacob was going to be at times. I wouldn't have chosen him; I would have chosen someone else.'

Well, that's an idea. Who would you have chosen?

'Well, I'd have chosen somebody respectable.'

Like your colleagues sitting here around you? There is a rumour going around that our Lord himself said of his apostles, 'You didn't choose me, I chose you.' And that is applicable to us, I presume. Do you hold to that? Yes, it was Christ who chose you. I don't think it was you coming along to Christ and saying, 'Now, Lord, I've a suggestion to make. You require witnesses. Now, I could be quite a substantial witness to you. In fact, I've got a great reputation in my district, and if you could only consider appointing me, I could do your cause a lot of good.'

That isn't how it happened, is it? Well, it didn't, and I know that, because Christ says, 'You didn't choose me, I chose you . . . that you should go forth and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide' (John 15:16). Christ is talking to them as his servants, to witness for him as the true vine.

So, it is Christ who does the choosing; but to come back to my question: who would you have chosen? You say, 'I would have chosen somebody absolutely sinless.'

You would? Well that rules out you lot, then. If God had insisted: 'The nation that is going to be my witness on the earth must be absolutely sinless', well then he wouldn't have had any witnesses.

How do you work it out? He chose Jacob, of course, but not on the grounds of whether he was sinless or whether his works were good or bad. God's choice of Israel had to be on those terms, for there wasn't anyone sinless in the whole earth. But pray understand again what Paul is talking about. When the twins' mother, Rebekah, realized she had twins she consulted the Lord about it.

And the children struggled together within her; and she said, 'If it be so, wherefore do I live?'

And she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her, 'Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples shall be separated even from your bowels: and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. (Gen 25:22–23)

The Lord said to her, 'two *nations*', not 'two *babies*'. Now, that is exceedingly important. In choosing Israel and not Esau, God was choosing a nation—the Israelite nation—and not the nation descended from Esau, which were the Edomites. Is that quite plain, or am I forcing Scripture and saying what Scripture doesn't say?

This is God's choice of a *nation* from among the other *nations*. The one shall serve the other—the older shall serve the younger. That wasn't true of the man Esau. He never did serve



Jacob. Read the story. And he certainly didn't bow down to Jacob (or Israel). Israel bowed down to Esau in the story (see Gen 33). Paul is quoting here from the initial prophecy, and it is nations that are the point of it. Of course, eventually Edom did bow down. The nation of Esau's descendants did bow down to the descendants of Israel, particularly in the time of David. Later on they revolted, of course.

We are talking about God's choice of the nation. Had he chosen them because they were better? Well, listen to Moses talking to Israel: 'The Lord didn't choose you because you were better. Don't get that into your heads. It wasn't because you were stronger or more numerous or anything else. The Lord chose you in his sovereignty, not according to your merit or your works' (see Deut 7:6–8). Some many years later, by the time of Malachi the prophet, God sent a message to the prophet about Edom: 'Israel have I loved; Esau have I hated' (see 1:2–3). Read the Old Testament prophets and you will find out why he hated him. It was because of his behaviour all down those intervening years as a *nation*.

### **God's mercy on and perseverance with Israel in spite of her sins, and his hardening of Pharaoh, are not unjust nor arbitrary**

If that is so, if God has chosen the nation of Israel on those terms—it wasn't their forefathers' initiative; it wasn't the merit of the children; it was God's sovereign choice—'Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid' (v. 14). For now you come to the story of Israel as a nation and then a story of Pharaoh.

For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that has mercy. For the Scripture says unto Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose did I raise you up, that I might show in you my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth.' So then he has mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardens. You will say then unto me, 'Why does he still find fault? For who withstands his will?' No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why did you make me thus?' Or has not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he before prepared unto glory . . . ? (vv. 15–23)

The argument is now going to turn, not on the origin of the nation but on their subsequent history, and God's dealing with the nation in the course of history. His dealing with the nation in the course of history is to be contrasted with his dealing with Pharaoh. So let us notice the analogy Paul uses: the potter, faced with the same lump of clay. And out of that same lump he makes a vessel to glory and honour, and he makes a vessel to dishonour—a vessel of wrath.

Let's fasten on the notion of 'the same lump', because now God is talking about Israel as a nation in the course of their history, and Pharaoh as the head of the nation of Egypt in the course of his history. He points out that they were 'of the same lump', demonstrating by their behaviour they were of the same lump—sinful, disobedient and often defiant of God. The

question that will arise, however, is this: when God showed mercy, how long would he wait with people's rejection, refusal and determination not to believe and not to repent? How long would he put up with that before either of those parties humbled themselves, acknowledged their sinfulness, repented and believed?

Now, this is a very big question and it applies still, doesn't it? How long will God wait, and what decides how long a person has to repent? One man hears the gospel ten thousand times in Sunday school, gospel meetings and so on. He carries on and lives without God, without repentance, until he gets to age sixty-five. Then he hears the gospel through some circumstance, repents and gets converted. Another man hears the gospel; goes out unrepentant, and gets run over by a bus. Who decides how long God will wait in his forbearance? The answer to that of course must be that this is not accidental. Since it is God that shows mercy, it is God that decides how long a person has and how long he is prepared to wait.

*The case of Pharaoh*

Pharaoh transformed himself into a vessel of wrath, and in a very real sense God used Pharaoh as a vessel of wrath to make his power known through all the earth. So now let's consider what the term *vessel* means in this connection.

A vessel of wrath is not simply somebody upon whom God eventually executes his wrath. A vessel of wrath is someone that God uses so that, in God's execution of wrath upon that person, that person becomes an exhibit, an exhibition, if you will, a demonstration, an object lesson, for all who ever hear of it. And those who hear of it learn thereby something about the character and holiness of God. And when Pharaoh hardened his heart, then God eventually used him as a vessel of wrath.

God hardened his heart: 'whom he will he hardens' (v. 18). The question is, when exactly did God harden his heart? Well, if you are going to understand this part of Romans, of course, you must read Exodus. And before Moses went into Pharaoh, God told Moses, 'He is not going to let you go, and I shall harden his heart' (see 7:1-4). God fully knew what was going to happen, of course. But when you look at the actual story and ask yourself when exactly, according to the story, it is said that 'the Lord hardened his heart', then it becomes exceedingly significant. Other phrases are used, as you see in this chart. This is the account of the nine plagues.

<p><b>Plague 1: Water to blood</b>                      In the morning . . . (7:15)                      Magicians did the same (7:22)  <i>Pharaoh's heart was hardened</i>                      (7:22)</p>	<p><b>Plague 4: Flies</b>                      Early in the morning . . . (8:20)  <i>Pharaoh hardened his heart</i> (8:32)</p>	<p><b>Plague 7: Hail</b>                      Early in the morning . . . (9:13)                      'But . . . for this cause I have made you to stand, for to show you my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth' (9:16).</p>
<p><b>Plague 2: Frogs (8:1-2)</b>                      Magicians did the same (8:7)  <i>Pharaoh hardened his heart</i> (8:15)</p>	<p><b>Plague 5: Murrain (9:1-3)</b>  <i>The heart of Pharaoh was stubborn</i> (9:7)</p>	<p><b>Plague 8: Locusts (10:1-4)</b></p>

Plague 3: Lice (8:16)	Plague 6: Boils (9:8–9)	Plague 9: Darkness (10:21)
Magicians could not (8:18)	Magicians could not stand	
Magicians: 'this is the finger of God'	(9:11)	
<i>Pharaoh's heart was hardened</i>	THE LORD HARDENED	
(8:19)	PHARAOH'S HEART (9:12)	

You say, 'There were ten plagues; you've made a mistake.'

Ah, but wait a minute. There were nine plagues; the tenth was a super-duper, exceptional plague, and it was the *judgment* of God: 'I will execute judgment' (see 12:12). This is not judgment; this is evidence. I will explain that in a moment, but there were nine pieces of evidence.

Various phrases are used. One is: 'Pharaoh's heart was hardened' (7:22; 8:19).

You say, 'Who hardened it?'

We are not told. Many people think that use of the passive: his '*heart was hardened*' implies it was God that hardened it. If Scripture had meant it, it would have said so like it does say at the end of Plague 6.

Consider this statement: 'Do you know, I went up the coast road the other day, and I came around a bend in the road, and the road was covered with rocks!'

Was covered? Who covered it? Well, nobody in particular; the stones just fell off down into the road, and the road was covered. By the time the car arrived, the road was covered. It isn't saying that the authorities covered it, or anybody else covered it. The stone just fell off the mountain.

So then the other phrase, 'Pharaoh hardened his heart' (see 8:15, 32). Or as in Plague 5: 'Pharaoh's heart was stubborn' (see 9:7). It is not until the end of the sixth plague that we have it explicitly said that the Lord hardened his heart (9:12). And what is the significance of that? Well, I think you'll have to let me tell you the story, because that's the best way we can answer the question.

### *The plagues and the hardenings*

God told Moses to go to Pharaoh and to say, 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews has sent me to you to tell you that you are to let my people go, says Jehovah, the Lord of Israel.'

'Who's he?' said Pharaoh. 'I don't think I've heard of him. What's this god's name? Jehovah, or something? No, I've never heard of him anyway. But let them go? Why should I let them go? I'm not going to let them go. I don't know your God, Jehovah.'

'Wait a moment,' said Moses, 'I can show you my God is real. He's given me this rod.'

'I see it,' said Pharaoh.

And Moses threw it down on the ground, and it became a snake. 'There we are, Pharaoh,' said he. 'Take note of that. See, my God is real.'

'Oh really. What's that supposed to be, Moses?'

'Well, a miracle.'

'Oh come off it, Moses; grow up. My scientists can do the same in their laboratories. They do it nearly every week.' So they rang a bell, and in came the scientists, dressed as they usually

do in white coats, of course (for some reason). And he said, 'Gentlemen, this Moses thinks he's just done a miracle, poor chap. He's thrown down his rod, and it's become a snake. Just show them that you can do the same thing.' So they did. 'There you are,' said Pharaoh. 'You'll have to do a better miracle than that, Moses, if you want to convince me.'

Well, it did so happen that Moses' rod gobbled up all the other rods. That didn't affect the scientists too much. They said it was an extraordinary phenomenon and, given further research and more funding, they could explain that as well. You mustn't bring God into it, of course not (see 7:1-13).

So now the plagues started. And God specially commissioned Moses. He goes in and does the first plague: water to blood. The magicians did the same. Well, I'm tempted to say that any old fool can pollute the rivers. It doesn't take God merely to pollute rivers. We know it all too well, don't we? All sorts of industrialists and others are polluting rivers, and the oceans indeed. Anyway, the magicians did the same.

'There you are,' said Pharaoh. 'Moses, you've got this funny idea in your head. You live in a pre-scientific age, old boy. This is not a miracle!'

So Moses was given another sign to do: the frogs. What a pest they were, and they came up everywhere. And the magicians did the same. 'You see,' said Pharaoh, 'you will have to do better than that if you want me to believe that this thing is a miracle performed by God.'

So Moses was told to produce the lice, at which point the magicians couldn't do it. The magicians themselves said to their master, 'Sir, this is the finger of God' (8:19). This was his own scientists telling him that this was a miracle performed by God. And Pharaoh said, 'Well if that's so of course, well I give in.'

Did he? No, he didn't. He asked for evidence. God gave him the evidence. And Pharaoh's heart was hardened. I don't know how that strikes you. It strikes me with a wonder of God's magnanimity and his mercy—putting up with Pharaoh, and enduring him. He asked for evidence, and God gave him evidence and took pains to distinguish what could be interpreted as being possible to the scientists, and what went beyond scientists and was an evident interposition of God, Jehovah. Pharaoh had his evidence, and his heart was hardened. And then what did God do?

You say, 'Struck him dead, of course!'

No, he didn't. Look at the next three plagues. How long will God wait and put up with him?

But with the flies, 'Pharaoh hardened his heart' (8:32). When the sores came on the cattle, 'the heart of Pharaoh was stubborn' (9:7). With the boils, well, even the scientists got the boils. The poor souls weren't able to stand up straight (v. 11). You might almost think God has a sense of humour. Notice the dear scientists of the day, the magicians (don't think that they were wizards; they were the best they knew about science); they couldn't even stand. And Pharaoh wouldn't repent. There were two lots of evidence, in the patience and forbearance of almighty God. And at last God says, 'Have it your way, Pharaoh,' and God 'hardened his heart' (see 9:12).

Before the next plague came, God explained to Moses what was happening: 'Tell Pharaoh for this cause I have made you to stand', says the Hebrew, referring not merely to the fact that God had raised him up and set him upon his throne in Egypt.

'Even now,' God says to Pharaoh, 'I could destroy you at once and would be perfectly just to destroy you. You asked for evidence. I have given you an abundance of evidence, and you know what the truth is. I could cut you off now. I'm not going to. I'm going to make you stand that I may make my name known throughout all the earth' (see 9:13–16).

God made him a vessel of wrath.

What would you have God to do? What would you have God to do with Hitler? Would you have him put his hand through his curly hair and say, 'Well you meant well on the whole'? There comes a point when a sinner will not repent and hardens his heart against God, and God himself will harden it and calls him to stand so that in judging that man publicly, God may make his holiness and character known throughout all the earth. When Israel eventually came to Canaan and came in, you would find people saying, 'We heard what God did to the Egyptians and to the rest', and Rahab got converted (see Josh 2:8–13).

The question is: how long will God go before he hardens? The fact is that he does harden some. And 2 Thessalonians says the same thing. God will wait, but in the end, it is written that 'God shall send them a strong delusion that they believe the lie' (see 2:11). On what grounds? 'Because they received not the love of the truth' (v. 10). That implies that they must have known the truth, does it not? You can't accuse anybody of refusing to receive the love of the truth if they never knew what the truth was. But where people have known the truth—known in their heart it is true, and refused to receive the love of the truth—God will send them a strong delusion that they believe the lie. Is that God being unreasonable? Well, if you won't have the truth, what have you got left, anyway? You are choosing the lie. There comes a point when God's forbearance comes to an end, and he gives people their choice and hardens them in it. They receive not the love of the truth therefore they believe the lie. And *the* lie, when it comes, will be a preposterous lie.

Pharaoh, therefore, was a vessel of wrath. Not only did God pour out his judgment on him, but of course he became an exhibition of the wrath of God.

### *The case of Israel*

Now we turn to Israel. It is said, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy' (Rom 9:15; Exod 33:19). This is God's sovereignty in mercy: 'So that it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that has mercy' (Rom 9:16). But to understand it you must go back to Exodus once again, to the chapter where that quotation is originally written. That was written after Israel's virtual apostasy at Mount Sinai, when they made themselves the golden calf. And Moses was up the mountain with God, receiving the two tables of the law. And God said to Moses, 'They have corrupted themselves, gone astray and made this golden calf—the very opposite of what they were called to witness to of the one, true God. Let me alone a moment. I'll destroy the whole lot of them, and I'll make of you a nation, Moses' (see 32:7–10). Could you have blamed God for doing it?

So Moses came down the mountain and eventually, after some long-time of Moses' intercessions and God's disciplines upon the people, he went up the mountain again pleading with God not to forsake them, not merely to go with them, but to go among them and maintain the nation, and take them on to their destiny in Canaan. And God said, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy', meaning that he wouldn't then wipe out the whole nation, but he'd

give them a chance to go ahead (see 33:12–19). What did that mean for Israel? Did it mean that none of them were judged at that time? It did not. For when Moses came down the mountain he told the Levites to gird their swords upon themselves and to slay their brethren who had been the organizers, instigators and the managers of this apostasy and had made the calf. They were judged and destroyed out of the nation. The nation as a whole, duped as they may have been by their spiritual leaders, was allowed to continue and was not wiped out. 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' In his forbearance he was allowing the nation to proceed in spite of their apostasy.

Not many days later they came to the borders of Canaan. They sent the spies across, and they came back with their report. Ten out of the twelve said, 'Oh, if we'd known this in advance we wouldn't have come!' And they spoke of making a captain and returning to Egypt. Caleb and Joshua tried to plead with them not to be so foolish, saying, 'God will give us the land', but they would not listen. And they talked of stoning Moses and going back to Egypt. And God said, 'I've had enough of this. You have seen my wonders ten times over and still you reject me, and you say you're not going into this land I've provided? Right, then you won't go in.' And God swore that those men being over twenty years old when they came out of Egypt would never go in the land. They would perish in the wilderness (see Num 13–14). Did that eliminate the nation? It came near to it; but Joshua and Caleb survived from the older generation, and those of the nation who were less than twenty years old when they came out of Egypt were allowed to continue. It was God's mercy.

'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' That doesn't mean that God said, 'It doesn't matter if Israel sins.' He disciplined them. And you know enough about Old Testament history to notice how eventually God turfed them all out of the land completely, and multitudes of Israelites perished because they rejected God, but the nation was spared. There came a time when Paul had witnessed it: Israel took their very Messiah—Son of the owner of the vineyard and of the universe—and put him on a tree. Would you not think that then at last God said, 'I'm done with Israel'? Our blessed Lord wept over Jerusalem: 'Oh Jerusalem, how often would I, but you wouldn't!' 'The time is coming when your enemies shall destroy you, and you will be scattered over the face of the earth' (see Matt 23:37–38; 24:1–13). And so they have been, but God has left a remnant on whom he will have mercy. You can see in history examples of who they were. Paul is talking in his own day. He too was a sinner. He was an Israelite. Now listen to him talking to Timothy: 'I was the veritable chief of sinners, but God had mercy on me because I did what I did in ignorance and unbelief. And for this cause he had mercy on me that in me as the chief he might show forth all his . . .' Do you remember the verse? ' . . . all his forbearance, his longsuffering' (see 1 Tim 1:13–16). You consider God putting up with Saul of Tarsus when he was herding Christians into prison, having them tortured, and standing over them to try and make them blaspheme the name of Jesus! How long would God put up with Saul? Paul said, 'But I did it in ignorance and unbelief.' 'And when the Lord appeared to me I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision' (see Acts 26:19). 'And he chose me, that I might be an example to all those subsequently who should believe on him unto eternal life' (see 1 Tim 1:16). Yes, Paul was a vessel of mercy. God not only had mercy on him but used him as an example of God's mercy to encourage the millions who have come on behind and have been saved as a result of Paul's testimony to the

grace of God. How long will God wait? Well, who can tell? But the question of how long God will wait must be left to God's sovereign choice. This then is what is meant by *vessels of mercy*.

### **Israel's restoration must be totally by God's grace and mercy**

What about Israel, that is, the majority of Israelites? Let's look at the end of the chapter.

What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, following after a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by works. They stumbled at the stone of stumbling; even as it is written, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence: and he that believes on him shall not be put to shame. (9:30-33)

So, we see *vessels of wrath* and *vessels of mercy*. Was it that God got angry with the Jews and wouldn't save them? No, no! Look at it. There were a lot of old Gentiles around the Roman Empire, you know. Were they seeking for righteousness? I should think not, most of them, not Gentiles. They were old pagans. One afternoon there came this Jew, and he was a funny looking chap. He came into their market square and began to preach and knocking on the doors, and he presented the gospel. And the Gentile women who attended the synagogue heard him preach, and the Gentiles who weren't seeking after anything in particular, heard the gospel and got converted. Here are vessels of mercy. Here is the doctrine of salvation by faith. Why didn't the Jews become vessels of mercy, then? For the simple reason that they wouldn't have the mercy. They wouldn't admit they needed the mercy. If you asked them, they were offended when Paul pointed out they were sinners and needed to be saved through the death of Christ on the cross. They got mightily offended. They were good enough, thank you, and they would earn their salvation by works! Well, if you could earn salvation by works, and you managed it, one thing you would never be is a vessel of mercy! You'd be a vessel of 'look how well I've worked; I'm an example to everybody else. I work so well I've got salvation; look at me!' You could never be a vessel of mercy, could you? Not on those terms. It is a heartbreaking thing that many religious people, even in Christendom, take that same view. They will not admit they're bad enough to need salvation by grace, not of works but of the mercy of God, and they hold to the fact that they are doing their very best to merit salvation. In that case they never will be vessels of mercy.

So here is Paul, I won't say 'struggling' for he was an apostle. How many hours, weeks, months and years did Paul break his heart over these matters and search the Scripture? He preached hundreds of times in synagogues, and the very people you could have expected to have been saved at the end of all his preaching, were not saved. Why weren't they? And why was it that multitudes of Gentiles were getting saved but not his own kinsmen, the Jews? Here is the true evangelist with a real heart who wants to know: 'Why is Israel not getting saved, Lord?' He pleaded for them, I don't know how many times. As he read the Old Testament Scriptures he was given to understand by the Lord what the principles of God's dealing are both with Gentiles and with Israel as a nation.

This is not merely theology, nor yet history. If you are an evangelist, this will go to your very heart as God helps you to see his diagnosis of why it is that Israel so apostatized and 'branches' had to be 'broken off'. But that is not the end of the story. God willing, we shall spend yet one more session on this passage, this time on chapters 10 and 11. And then, by decree from the organizers of these sessions, I shall not take any questions in the fourth session but use it to make some leading remarks about chapters 12–16 and show how they relate to the book and how they are an integral part of its message.



## Why Were They Not Saved?

### *The Argument of Romans 10–11*

In our earlier two sessions I spent a lot of time trying to put chapters 9, 10 and 11 of Romans into the context of the rest of the book. In this session I cannot go into the same detail with chapters 10 and 11 as I did with chapter 9. I must content myself with simply a listing of their major contents.

If we wanted to sum up the general argument of Romans 9, 10 and 11 we could perhaps put it like this as a very rough summary of the contents of these three chapters and the progression of their argument.

#### **9:1–13**

God's promise, purpose and plan are not ruined by the defection of the majority in Israel: God's election has always secured the maintenance of Israel's God-given role. So even at this time, says Paul, there is an election according to grace. The bulk of the New Testament was written by Jews. There is a remnant therefore, now. One day *all Israel*, that is, Israel as a whole, shall be saved. So says Romans 9:1–13.

#### **9:14–10:21**

Israel's fall and failure to be saved is altogether Israel's fault: they refuse mercy, they insist on their own merit, they will not submit, they disobey and rebel.

#### **11:1–36**

Then in the final chapter in this section of the book, chapter 11 presents God's strategy against the background of the rebellion of the majority in Israel. Paul tells us what God's strategy is: he uses Israel's fall to enrich the Gentiles, and the Gentiles' salvation to provoke Israel to jealousy (that is, to envy) and thus to repentance and faith, to the grand end that he might have mercy upon all.

### **The reasons they were not saved**

Now, it is the fact that, after hearing preaching, the congregation not infrequently goes away and discusses the preacher. I know that from experience, of course. The congregations don't always realize the fact that, after the preaching, the preacher goes away and discusses the congregation. Paul did, as you see here. He had preached to his fellow Jews hundreds of times.

They were the very people that you might have expected to be saved. They knew the law, they knew the Old Testament, they knew of the prophecies of Messiah. The difficult thing for Paul was that while multitudes of Gentiles had been converted, in so many places only a few Jews had professed faith in Christ, and the rest had rejected it and sometimes done so violently. The thing that exercises his heart is this: why are they not getting saved? And he now gives a whole series of reasons why they were not getting saved. I can do no more than just go over them very briefly.

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|-----|--|----------|
| 1.  | It wasn't that Paul had not prayed for them: he had.   | 10:1     |
| 2.  | It wasn't that they were irreligious: they had a zeal for God.   | 10:2     |
| 3.  | It was that, being ignorant of the true function of the law, they would not submit to God's way of justifying sinners, but insisted on their own way.  | 10:3-5   |
| 4.  | It was not that justification by faith is difficult to achieve. It is easy: 'the word is . . . in your mouth and in your heart'.   | 10:6-11  |
| 5.  | It was not that God has favourites: <i>whoever</i> calls shall be saved.   | 10:12-13 |
| 6.  | For people to call on the name of the Lord, four conditions have to be met:  | 10:14-15 |
|     | a. They have to believe in him;  |          |
|     | b. For that to happen, they have to hear him;  |          |
|     | c. For that to happen, there has to be a preacher;   |          |
|     | d. For that to happen, the preacher has to be sent.  |          |
| 7.  | It wasn't that these conditions were not fulfilled. The trouble was that they would not obey the gospel.   | 10:16    |
| 8.  | It wasn't that they couldn't believe unless God first gave them the faith to believe with. 'Faith comes by hearing . . . the word of Christ'.  | 10:16-17 |
| 9.  | It wasn't that they were so dead in trespasses and sins that they couldn't hear the word of Christ. They did hear.   | 10:18    |
| 10. | It wasn't that Israel did not realize what was happening and what 'being saved' meant. Gentiles were getting saved in front of their very eyes, as the Old Testament had prophesied they would.                      | 10:19-20 |
| 11. | It wasn't that God had not elected them, and so they could not be saved. All day long God stood with outstretched arms pleading with them to come. But they refused him, contradicted him, and rebelled against him. | 10:21    |
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### **1. It wasn't that Paul had not prayed for them: he had (10:1)**

It wasn't, was it, that Paul had not prayed for them? 'My heart's desire and prayer for Israel is that they might be saved' (see 10:1). He'd prayed enough for them. Why weren't they saved?

### **2. It wasn't that they were irreligious (10:2)**

They were religious: they had a zeal for God. Then why were they not saved? You may have wondered the same thing about folks in Christendom who show great zeal for God and for rituals and for prayers and for church attendance, but if you should ask them: no, they're not saved. Why aren't they saved?

### 3. It was a form of ignorance (10:3-5)

The first basic reason why they were not saved was that it was a form of ignorance. It was that, being ignorant of the true function of the law and thinking that through keeping the law they might attain to eternal life, they would not submit to God's way of justifying sinners. Notice the verb used. They would not *submit* to it. It wasn't merely that they didn't understand it, but they wouldn't submit to it but insisted on a way of producing their own righteousness.

Many people still have that false idea of the function of the law. To use a crude analogy, the law is like a thermometer. If you feel a bit shivery, and you take a thermometer and put it in your mouth, you will see what your temperature is, and if your temperature is going up and up you'll know that you are sizably ill, and it's about time you went to bed and called in a doctor or something. A thermometer shows you how ill you are. But if one day you heard I was ill, and you came and visited me, and I was in bed there with a nightcap on my head and everything else, and I was vigorously sucking a thermometer, you might inquire, 'Gooding, why are you sucking that thermometer?'

'I'm ill, what do you think I'm doing it for?'

'Yes, but why are you sucking a thermometer?'

'Well the doctor said I've got a very high temperature, and if I couldn't bring it down I could die. I'm trying to get the high temperature down.'

You'd say, 'Gooding, you are ill (more ill than you realize). The thermometer registers the fact that you are ill and shows you how ill you are, but sucking a thermometer won't cure you.'

And trying to keep God's law and attain its standard won't save us. It has to be by an altogether different method.

### 4. It was not that justification by faith is difficult to achieve (10:6-11)

Justification is by faith—receiving the righteousness that comes from God, and not one we have manufactured ourselves, but they were not saved. Why? Is it that being saved is a very difficult thing? Is this justification by faith business very difficult, and that's why they are not saved? 'No, it isn't,' says Paul. 'Far from being difficult, you don't have to go up to heaven or down to the abyss to get it. The word is in your mouth and in your very heart' (see vv. 6-8). All you have to do is to say it, and to close in on it in your heart. It is the very opposite of being difficult. How marvellously simple God's way of salvation is.

### 5. It was not that God has favourites (10:12-13)

Could it be that God has favourites, and so he saves some but doesn't save others? 'No,' says Paul, 'whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved', for 'the same Lord over all is rich to all that call upon him' (see vv. 12-13). There are two things you have to do: one is to call on the name of the Lord. Second, you need to stop thinking you are different and so you don't need salvation. It doesn't matter who you are. Whoever you are, 'the same Lord over all is rich to all that call upon him, for "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"' (see vv. 12-13; Joel 2:32).

## **6. For people to call on the name of the Lord, four conditions have to be met (10:14–15)**

So, it is not a question of God having favourites. On the other hand, if salvation is for those who call on the name of the Lord, then four conditions have to be met, and Paul lists them. For anybody to call on the name of the Lord, first *they will have to believe in him*. And for people to believe in him, they have to hear . . . Now, please note the translation. They have to *hear him*; not hear about him. To believe him, *you have to hear him*. If people are going to hear him, *there has to be a preacher*. And it isn't just any old preacher. In order for it to be a preacher through whose preaching people will hear, not merely the preacher, but Christ himself, *the preacher has to be sent*.

Here are four conditions that must be fulfilled if people are to call on the name of the Lord to be saved. Well, now, tell me; so many in Israel are not saved: is it that any one of these four conditions have not been fulfilled, and that would account for their not being saved?

## **7. It wasn't that these conditions were not fulfilled (10:16)**

Paul says it straight. It wasn't that these conditions were not fulfilled. The trouble was that they did *hear*, but they would not *obey* the gospel.

There are two words in Greek that are relevant here. One is the ordinary verb 'to hear': *akouo*. And you are knowledgeable about *akouo*; of course you are, because you understand exactly what *acoustics* are, and thereby you know a lot of Greek. *Akouo* means 'I hear'. Then there's another verb *hupakouo*, which means: 'to obey; to listen, to hear and submit to what you hear—to believe it and submit'. They were not saved. It wasn't that they hadn't heard. They had heard! They wouldn't obey.

## **8. It wasn't that they couldn't believe unless God first gave them the faith to believe with (10:16–17)**

Was it then that they couldn't actually believe because, as some say, faith is the gift of God and God had decided not to give them the faith, so they couldn't believe anyway? No, that isn't true either, because consider how faith comes. 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ' (see v. 17). Yes, of course faith is the gift of God, but how does God give the gift? How does he produce the faith? Well, faith comes by hearing—hearing the word of Christ, hearing Christ speak—it is that that draws out the faith.

There's no mystery in it. If you were a businessman and another businessman in town came to you with a proposition, it might look okay, but as he sat there expounding his proposition to you, you would weigh him up, wouldn't you? You'd listen to him; you'd watch him; you'd see whether he was nervous and fidgety and whether he kept smoking too much, and if in answer to your questions he avoided some of them and went around in circles with his answers to others. As you listened you would make up your mind whether he was to be trusted or not; and if you decided that he was to be trusted it wouldn't be merely on the grounds of his proposition. That, of course, would count, but it would depend on your weighing him up as a suitable chap to be trusted.

You did the same with Christ. He has a magnificent gospel, but as you hear him you come to believe in him. How else on earth would you ever believe in him? It is because of his character, because of his person, because of what he is. That brings your faith. It is not that God has decided not to give them the faith and so they couldn't believe. The faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. They rejected the word of Christ.

### **9. It wasn't that they were so dead in trespasses and sins that they couldn't hear the word of Christ (10:18)**

Some people think when it says in the Bible we are 'dead in trespasses and in sins' (see Eph 2:1) it means we are as dead as a fallen tree trunk, and therefore if you are unregenerate it's no good telling you to believe; you might as well address a chunk of wood or a bit of stone and tell that to believe. You are dead in trespasses and in sins: you can't hear; you can't respond, or anything of the sort. Well, it's not true. They did hear. Look at Romans 10:18, if you please. This is a question in Greek, 'But I say, did they not hear?' But it is strong in Greek. That is why I paraphrase it: 'It wasn't, was it, that they did not hear? That wasn't the reason why they were not saved, was it?' Answer: 'No, of course it wasn't the reason.' They did hear. 'Yes, verily, their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.'

### **10. It wasn't that Israel did not realize what was happening and what 'being saved' meant (10:19-20)**

Now follows another question. Was it then that Israel did not know? Did Israel not realize what was happening? And once again it is that kind of question in Greek: 'It wasn't that Israel didn't know, was it? No, it wasn't that.'

First Moses says, 'I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation, with a nation void of understanding will I anger you.' And Isaiah is very bold, and says, 'I was found of them that sought me not; I became manifest unto them that asked not of me'. (v. 19-20)

In other words, Paul is now saying Israel were not saved, that is, the majority of them were not saved, but it wasn't that they didn't know. It wasn't that they didn't know that there was a salvation on offer. It wasn't that they didn't know that people were getting saved. Isaiah had prophesied it. There would come a time when even Gentiles—those who weren't Jews, and didn't know the first thing about God—would come flocking to the Saviour.

If you read Acts 13 you will see a record of it happening. Paul and his companion came to Antioch in Pisidia (not to be confused with the other Antioch) and went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. And we get a preacher. Well, Paul was a cunning old preacher when all is said and done! It is not always the best idea when you are asked to preach in a Jewish synagogue as he was, to go in and say, 'What you need, rabbi, is to be saved. Are you saved?' They mightn't like the term. So Paul was handed the Bible, and he began to preach. And he said, 'You know, the God of our fathers exalted the people.'

Well, that's a nice verb, isn't it? Talk about diplomacy. He didn't say, he 'saved our people'; he said 'he exalted our people'. Then the rabbinic beards were going up and down:

'Yes, he exalted our people out of Egypt. Yes, God was marvellous. He gave us political freedom.'

'And then he sent the judges who delivered them.'

'Yes, marvellous, he did indeed—from all the moral corruption of the time.'

Paul didn't say, 'saved them', no, 'delivered them' will do.

'And after the judges, he offered them Saul, but Saul was no good, and he raised up of David's seed, a *Saviour*.'

It was David who saved them from all their enemies all the way around and brought them to the head of the nations. What magnificent salvation! Even the rabbis were agreeing at that stage, and nodded their approval about how this man's seed, according to his promise, is raised up unto Israel as a Saviour.

Note the context.

He said, 'And this marvellous salvation, of which the prophets witness that he raised him from the dead, gentlemen, tell me, what is the good of all your other salvations—be they political, moral or whatever they are—ultimately, if the whole lot of them put together land you up in the grave and there's no further hope? Surely the hope of Israel is something bigger than that, isn't it? And this man was raised up as a Saviour—risen from the dead.'

It is magnificent salvation, but not everybody is always keen to hear too much about the resurrection of the dead, because instinct tells them that if there is a resurrection there is going to be a final judgment. The Sadducees preferred to think that there wasn't any resurrection from the dead. There are a lot of folks today who prefer that as well. You talk about the resurrection, and they're not sure they want it. They like to think you die as a dog.

And here comes Paul, therefore, with his crowning example of salvation: 'By him do all the prophets witness that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins. And by him whoever believes on him can be justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.' That was very skilful evangelism, to that audience (see vv. 16–40).

Of course, when he moved on to Athens he didn't say, 'Now, gentlemen, open your Bibles, please.' No, that had to be a different approach altogether, but there were a lot of Greeks present in the synagogue at Antioch—particularly women who were 'God-fearers'. When they heard that they said to themselves, 'We've never heard that before. We've been coming to this synagogue for years. We've never heard them say anything like that about salvation and forgiveness!' And they got very excited. And the next Sabbath, the whole city was gathered together in the place, and multitudes of the Gentiles believed. And the Jews, when they saw it happening, got jealous and started to refute it. And Paul had to appeal to them: 'Have you not read Isaiah's prophecy that one day God will raise up a standard in the house of Israel, in the house of Judah, and to him shall the Gentiles come? Look at them coming, right in front of your noses' (see v. 41).

Did Israel not know? People were getting saved in front of their eyes and, what is more, they were Gentiles, and according to what Isaiah prophesied. They knew all right, but they wouldn't have it. And Paul had to warn them: 'Beware, lest there come upon you that which is written in the prophets: "Beware you despisers, and tremble, and perish"' (see 13:13–48).

How many religious people have seen conversions and still won't have the gospel, and prefer religion?

### **11. It wasn't that God had not elected them, and so they could not be saved (10:21)**

Finally, was it that they weren't saved because God had not chosen them to be saved, that they weren't elected, and therefore that accounts for their not being saved? No, indeed not; for now at length, God himself, brushing aside all else, comes to the fore.

But as to Israel [God] says, 'All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. (v. 21)

By definition these 'disobedient and gainsaying people' are people who reject the gospel. And what is God's attitude to them? Well, ponder only the vivid gesture. 'I stretched forth my hands' says God, 'and stood there all day long, like a parent would stretch out his hand to a child and say, "Come, dear, come."'

'All day long I have stretched out my hands . . .', and that was a stretch. When they took his Son and nailed him to a cross, I tell you, that was some stretch of God's hands, bidding Israel: 'Come.'

You have to answer the question: did he want them to come? There are those who tell us, 'No, these were the unbelieving; they were the non-elect, and God didn't want them to come. He knew they couldn't come unless he gave them the faith to believe with, and he had already decided not to give them the faith. He had already decided and did not elect them. He had decided to pass them by.'

Really? And that was why they were not saved? Well, what was he doing, tell me, stretching out his arms to *these* people, making it seem he wanted them to come when all the while he knew they couldn't come? He knew they couldn't come unless he gave them the faith to come with, and he decided not to give them the faith to come? And he knew he was determined to pass them by but was (what verb shall I use) *pretending* he wanted them to come?

You won't answer that by saying that God has two purposes: he has his outward purpose publicly in which he says he would have all men to be saved, but he has a private set of purposes hidden from our eyes, in which he doesn't want all to be saved. God is not two-faced.

Why were they not saved? It wasn't because they wanted to be saved and God wouldn't save them. It was that when God stood pleading with them, they just stood back: they disobeyed, contradicted him and rebelled.

Well, you'd think after that God would now say, 'That's enough', and cast away the whole nation. Romans 11 is going to raise that question.

## God's strategy for the eventual salvation of all Israel

### 1. God has not cast off his people, has he? No! (11:1-6)

Once more I must appeal to Paul's Greek; this time in 11:1. 'I say then, it is not that God has cast away his people, is it? No, it is not, indeed so. God did not cast away his people. God has not cast them away. How can I know that? Because I am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God did not cast off his people which he foreknew' (see vv. 1-2)

Now, I am quite aware that this same writer, Paul, in Ephesians 2 tells us that under Christ, God has done a new thing. He has taken Jew and Gentile and not just added Jews on, stuck them on, so to speak. Of the two—Jew and Gentile—he has made one new man, so making peace (see v. 15). That doesn't mean that Paul ceased to be a Jew or that he ceased to be an Israelite. Listen to him in Romans: 'I am an Israelite.' He gives you his tribe and so forth (v. 1). And as we saw in our earlier session, just as in Elijah's day, God has left himself a remnant. Pray, see what that means. The testimony of Israel is going on. Consider the apostles. Luke may have been a Gentile, but the Gospels are otherwise written by Jews, and the Epistles likewise, and the book of the Revelation. The testimony of Israel is going on. Of course, Gentiles are coming in and now form the majority in the church. So in the same way now there is a remnant of Israel chosen by God on the ground that they are prepared to accept salvation by grace, and not by their own works. It is an election of grace.

When it comes to election, do observe that God's election is not arbitrary. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul bids them consider their election, and how they have been chosen of God. Why have they been chosen of God? God has chosen the weak things of the world. There were not many righteous, not many wise. God has chosen the weak things, and the things that are not. Thus has he laid it down (see 1 Cor 1:26-29). Our Lord says he has hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to little children (see Luke 10:21). It is open to anybody to take the position of a little child, but God in his choice has laid the terms of salvation down. You must come as a little child: 'Except you be converted and become as a little child you shall not enter the kingdom of God' (see Luke 18:17). God's electing grace lays down the conditions of whom he is prepared to save. Here, the conditions are of grace. If you won't have salvation by grace, and insist on having it by your works, well you won't get salvation. For grace, in this context, means 'not by works'. If it were by works it would not be of grace.

What is more, however, God's judicial hardening of the rest of Israel is in accord with Old Testament prophecies (see Isa 29:1; Deut 29:4; Ps 69:22-23). God had indicated it in the Old Testament, as Paul warned the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia that if they would reject his mercy and his Son, God would eventually harden them in their unbelief (Acts 13).

### 2. Israel have not stumbled and fallen so as never to rise again, have they? No!

Once more Paul issues one of these questions. It is as the Greek grammarians say, 'A question so framed as it expects the answer: no.'

'I say then that they didn't stumble so that they might fall completely, did they? No' (see v. 11). It's not that they've stumbled and gone to perdition. But now, as we saw in our earlier



session, he is talking of the nation as such—the majority of Israel are unrepentant and unbelieving; they reject the Messiah, and troubles galore have come upon them. But because of this falling it doesn't mean that God has finished with the nation, and that they have so stumbled as a nation that they will never arise again. No, it does not mean that.

I was once leading a study group, and we got to this point in Romans. There were various folks there, and one of them had embraced this doctrine of election which says that God has elected some to salvation and elected some to damnation. So I appealed with this question. God hasn't cast off his people, has he? I said the answer was, 'No.'

And the good man listening to it said, 'That's wrong. Yes, he has!'

I couldn't convince him there and then. Perhaps he learned better later on, but Christendom for many centuries held that God had cast them off completely, and that the church had taken the place of Israel; there was no future for Israel in spite of what is written. They have not stumbled so they should fall irreparably; they will be restored.

And what is more, 'if their fall is the riches of the world, and their loss the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fullness?' (v. 12). In the strategies of God, when Israel rejected Messiah, the gospel has gone out to Gentiles. It has been the enrichment of the Gentile world. But God is determined, in the end, to restore Israel. And when they are restored, how much more wealth shall it be? It will be a veritable life from the dead.

But notice already Paul's description of God's strategy: 'by their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy' (v. 11). Paul had seen it many times; he saw it again when he went to Jerusalem and into the temple with certain Jewish believers to pay for the sacrifices necessary for the fulfilment of their vow (Acts 21). And the Jewish mob set upon him and would have murdered him, but the captain of the Roman guard in the Antonia tower saw what was happening and rushed down with a detachment of troops and rescued Paul and carried him up the steps into the Roman castle. It was right next to the temple court. And Paul asked permission, when he got to the top of the stairs, to turn around and address the crowd.

What a moving situation. They had nearly murdered him. He told them the story of his conversion. It is vividly told, of course: 'You know, I'm not just any old riffraff; and, sparing your blushes, I trained under the leading rabbi of the day, you know. I have my degree.'

It wasn't like Paul to boast, was it? But he wasn't having Jews who scarce knew *aleph* from *tau* (A from Z) tell him that he was a heretic!

'Do you know what? The Lord appeared to me the way he appeared to some of the ancient prophets. He appeared to me. Why wouldn't I tell you what the Lord said? He appeared to Isaiah, didn't he, and to Ezekiel? Well, he appeared to me as well. And what is more, I was in the temple subsequent to my conversion, and the Lord said, "You'd better leave Jerusalem for they won't listen to you, and I'm sending you to the Gentiles." And I pleaded with the Lord to let me stay in Jerusalem, but he sent me to the Gentiles.'

At which point the crowd erupted! If they could have got hands on him, they would have torn him to shreds. It was jealousy, for here was a Jew giving the sacred privileges of Jews to Gentiles, and provoking them to jealousy. It is all part of God's tactics to get them to see what they were missing and to bring them to repentance.

I've said it to a few Jewish friends of mine. I've said, 'You don't like Jesus, do you? No, you don't like him very much. But I tell you what, I'm an old Gentile, you know, but I have come to believe, not just in any old god but in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! And if you ask me how I as a pagan have come to believe in him, it's that Jesus has done it for me. You show me another Jew who has led as many millions to faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as Jesus Christ has.

Yes, it is to provoke them to jealousy.

### **Things that Gentile believers should remember (11:13-24)**

#### *11:13-14*

Paul glorifies his mission to the Gentiles, not because Gentiles are superior to Jews, but in an attempt to provoke unbelieving Jews to envy, and thus to salvation.

#### *11:15*

'For if the casting away of Israel has led to the reconciling of the world, their restoration will bring veritable life from the dead' (see v. 15). This is something to be looked forward to and earnestly prayed for, of course.

#### *11:16*

The present remnant of Jewish believers is the firstfruits of the eventual conversion of *all Israel*. The firstfruits are holy: so will the full mass be. The firstfruits are holy—every one of them called 'saints' by God. Like Gentile believers, the firstfruits are holy, so will the full mass be when they are converted. This is respect, therefore, for Jews.

#### *11:17-18*

The patriarchs were the root, and they were holy. So are the branches (excepting, of course, those that had to be cut off). But the branches are holy: Abraham, David, and present Jewish believers. We must have respect for the great olive tree of Israel's testimony.

#### *11:19-22*

Gentile Christians have no ground for boasting that some natural branches were broken off and Gentiles grafted in. 'Some branches had to be cut off,' Paul explains, and Gentiles were grafted in. Do remember it's the root that carries you, and not you the root. The root, of course, was the patriarchs, wasn't it—Abraham, onward. This is Israel as a testament in the world—the olive tree.

Some branches had to be broken off. That's an understatement. Multitudes of the branches had to be broken off. You have been grafted in, but grafted into that great movement of God—his testimony in the world, as we were thinking about in our earlier sessions, all of God's self-revelation in the Old Testament through Israel. We have been grafted into that root. So don't boast against the branches, because if God didn't spare the branches when they sinned, and when they became unbelieving and apostatized, neither will he spare you if you don't continue in the faith.

Now, Paul is not denying the eternal security of the believer, but he is pointing out that eternal security depends on the fact that we are believers. And here Paul talks to Gentile

Christendom. When Israel apostatized and rejected the Son of God, God cut them off! You need a megaphone to tell Christendom that today. I don't know one university in the UK that has a department of theology where all the members of the department believe in the inspiration of God's word to start with. And in Christendom, how many professors of theology have denied the virgin birth, still deny the deity of Christ, deny the literal bodily resurrection of Christ and his second coming again? Christendom is apostatizing. God won't put up with it forever. If you don't remain in faith God will cut you off: this is Paul talking to Gentile (what we nowadays call) Christendom.

It was an early phenomenon in the church that, as the apostles grew old, even in the churches there had come in secretly men who had denied the very foundations of the gospel. You'll find the later epistles point it out. Read 2 Peter for instance. Now we see Christendom with its terrible moral laxity allowing all sorts of immorality and goodness knows what else in the churches in the name of the grace of God. And listen to some of the archbishops still. They say it is okay to have practicing homosexuals accepted as believers in the congregation, and if need be, to be bishops. Immorality and denying the fundamentals of the gospel were already happening in some of the churches to which Jude and Peter wrote.

11:23-24

If it has been possible to graft in wild branches (Gentile believers); it will certainly be possible for natural (Jewish) branches, though now broken off, to be grafted back in again.

### **The mystery of Israel's present temporary hardening, and future salvation (11:25-31)**

Yes, some of the branches (Gentiles) will now be cut out and the original branches put into the olive tree; meaning that Jews will get converted, and *all Israel* (Israel as a whole) shall be saved and be grafted back into the testimony to God.

You say, 'Why doesn't God do it at once, then? If his purpose and strategy has been, by the salvation of Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy and get them saved, why hasn't he done it yet?'

The final verses of the chapter explain what God has to do to get people saved.

### **What God has to do to get Gentiles and Jews saved (11:32)**

No one can be brought to believe (in the full sense of that term) until they have been brought to realize that up till now they have been unbelievers. If you had gone to Saul when he was chasing up the Damascus road persecuting Christians and said, 'Half a minute, sir; if you'll allow me to stop your chariot: Are you a believer?' He would have said, 'What do you think? You are insulting me. Of course I'm a believer!'

He wasn't, was he? And when the glory appeared to him on the Damascus road he realized not only had he been an unbeliever in Jesus, but now there was no escaping that Jesus was God: 'Who are you, Lord?' God was bigger than Saul of Tarsus had imagined, and Saul was an unbeliever in God. He was brought to salvation, of course, but first he had to acknowledge he was an unbeliever: 'And I obtained mercy, because I did it in ignorance and in unbelief' (see 1 Tim 1:13).

God has therefore 'shut up all to unbelief' (Rom 11:32); that is, he will shepherd them like a shepherd guides sheep, until there is only one gate to go through, until they come to realize that they are unbelievers and need to repent and become believers.

I don't know if you've ever had the experience (I think you must have) of talking to very religious people. And you talked about salvation, and you told them they need to be born again. And they struggle with that, and they think you're insulting them. 'I am a believer anyway,' they say.

And you say, 'That's good. So you're sure you're saved?'

'No, you can't be sure you're saved.'

You say, 'Well I'm sure.'

'How can you be sure?'

And then you explain the gospel, how that we come short, and we could only be saved by Christ dying for us at the cross. And now he is risen, and he invites us to come and we personally trust him and receive from him the gift of eternal life, and so have absolute certainty of salvation.

And the person says, 'Well if that's what you mean by believing then, no, I'm not a believer.'

Well there's hope for them, then! To bring religious folks to the point where they see they are not believers is what God is aiming to do. Gentiles generally didn't have much difficulty in admitting they were unbelievers. Jews had enormous difficulty, and still do.

I have a Jewish friend in town. Now and again he invites his business colleagues and me to a lunch party to discuss all sorts of things. And since his colleagues are mostly believers, we get around to discussing the Christian gospel in the end, of course, and the future for Israel and all such things. More than once, when we've come around to the fact that we are all sinners, he has boiled up with rage that is difficult to contain: 'I am not a sinner; I will not have it!' But God, under his disciplines, will one day bring the Jews to the realization that they have been unbelievers and have rejected God's own Son and have refused to believe God. He will bring them there 'that he might have mercy on all' (v. 32).

### **Doxology to the wisdom and knowledge of God in devising ways of achieving the salvation of the maximum number of people (11:33-36)**

Paul ends with a doxology to the wisdom and knowledge of God, demonstrated in his tactics.

#### **A summary of God's tactics**

So let's sum up by looking back to the program in 11:25-31.

##### *11:25*

There is a time limit. This temporary hardening will last only until 'the fullness of the Gentiles has come in'. Remember the phrase of our Lord as the shepherd in the Gospel of John: 'Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold of Judaism. Them also I must bring, and there shall be one flock, one shepherd' (see 10:16).

11:26

When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, *all Israel* shall be saved at the coming of the deliverer.

11:27

'Israel,' says Paul, 'will then enter into the good of the covenant'. That is the new covenant that God has made with them; he will bring them into the covenant that was made, of course, by Christ at Calvary. The Jews will be brought into the good of it.

11:28-29

At present, Israel is hostile to the gospel and therefore to Christians; but they are to be loved for God's unchangeable electing grace that chose their forefathers.

11:30-31

And we see the fairness and balance of God's strategies. The Gentiles, in the past, were disobedient, says Paul. That means they rejected God's testimony. Yet now through Israel's disobedience, the Gentiles have received mercy. So now the Israelites have been guilty of the disobedience of unbelief, like the Gentiles were. But 'by the mercy shown to you [that is, you Gentiles] they also [being provoked by envy] may obtain mercy'.

#### *The wisdom of God*

These are God's strategies, and this goes beyond mere theory, doesn't it? Because there is many a Christian heart that inwardly mourns: 'Why are my children not saved?'

Why doesn't God save Israel? Feel how Paul's heart is wounded and troubled. But if we believe and preach the gospel, we have to dare to trust God's wisdom and God's strategies. So this third part of Romans ends like the first and the second parts end. It ends with a doxology, but this time not to the love of God, as the first two did. It is a doxology to the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

### **Conclusion to section three**

Let that suffice for the moment. That is a very hasty and ragged presentation, but we labour under the constraints of time. I'm not going to invite questions today. I suggest you make your questions and write them down, because I have touched on many things over which God's people argue, sometimes with love and affection, and sometimes with not quite so much love and affection. My job is not to impose my view on you, but to get you to think. And where I am wrong, please correct me. When, God willing, we meet again towards the end of the year on another topic, I may make time for the questions then, and that will have the advantage of then being your mature thought on the matter.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The questions from that other occasion have been included as the final Q & A in this transcript.

## The Yielded Body and the Renewed Mind

### *A Brief Synopsis of Romans 12–16*

We come now to the last five chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, and I have made no pretence of doing more than just to sketch in a few leading ideas. On this chart I have listed some of the main topics.

<b>Chapter 12</b>	1. Ethics: a response to God's mercies. 2. Rejection of conformity to world: transformation in accordance with God's will. 3. The believer: his gift and duties.
<b>Chapter 13</b>	4. The believer and the wrath of God: (a) Individually: avenge not yourselves; (b) Submit to state: the minister of wrath. 5. The believer and fulfilling the law. 6. Living in the light of the coming day.
<b>Chapter 14</b>	7. The weak and the strong: (a) The importance of the individual's personal faith in direct accountability to the Lord;
<b>Chapter 15</b>	(b) The importance of unity between Gentile and Jew. 8. The God of endurance, of comfort, of hope and of peace.
<b>Chapter 16</b>	9. Greetings to individual believers. 10. THE FINAL VICTORY—the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. 11. FINAL DOXOLOGY . . . to the ONLY WISE GOD.

## Overview

### Chapter 12

These are exceedingly practical things, of course, but let's notice how Paul's exhortations begin.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice. (1:1)

We notice, therefore, the key to Christian ethics. Someone has said the Christian ethics are gratitude in action.

I think myself that we should not use the old English translation: 'I beseech you', and certainly not substitute, 'I implore you', because he is doing this on the basis of God's mercies that have been outlined in the forgoing chapters: in the giving of his Son, in the riches of his forbearance and the glories of his salvation. Tell me, in the light of that, does God have to get down on his knees and *implore* you to yield your bodies? The Greek word *parakaleo* is a word a general would use of his troops. He doesn't implore his troops; he exhorts them, challenges them, bids them and commands them. And here is the apostle, in the name of the mercy of Christ. Oh, what an insult to God it would be if I had to get down on my knees and implore you, to yield your body as a living sacrifice.

Let's notice the order:

to yield your bodies as a living sacrifice . . . which is your reasonable service. And be not fashioned according to the world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (see vv. 1-2).

There are two things then: body and then mind. It is not mind without body, nor body without mind. The body needs to be *presented*; the mind needs constantly to be *renewed*. Our minds are renewed by reading God's word and absorbing God's standards and his ideas. That is a constant process of renewal, and we are called upon to make that renewal of our minds. It doesn't come automatically; it is not a matter merely of emotional feelings. It is a deliberate call, like an army general to his troops to prepare for battle; they had better see to it that their kit is in order and they are prepared physically and emotionally.

You will notice that Paul mentions the body first, and then the mind. If we waited until we understood everything, we might be a long while presenting our bodies. It would be like the centipede, of whom it is said once fell into a bit of a ditch. As it was lying there on its back, it wanted to get up. But then it pondered: 'Now which leg do I put first when I want to walk? Is it the first one on the right, or the first one on the left? Or do I push with my back feet first and then the rest? What do I do?' It spent such a long time pondering this philosophical problem of which foot was to be first, it never did get up.

There is a danger too. We have to decide: 'Now, my body and all that is *me*, I dedicate to the Lord.' Let me then keep renewing my mind all the way through my pilgrimage, but absorbing God's word and his ideas by the help of his Spirit that I might use my body evermore closely to what God's will is.

And there are these various elements covered in chapter 12—the believer's gifts and his duties.

## Chapter 13

Here Paul discusses the believer and the wrath of God. Individually, we are not to avenge ourselves. But we are to submit to the state, for the state is God's minister of wrath. We also find here the believer's attitude to the fulfilling of the law. And we see an emphasis then on living in the light of the coming day, for 'the night is far spent, and the day is at hand' (see v. 12).

### Chapter 14

This is the chapter on the attitude of the weak and the strong: those whose faith is weak and those whose faith is strong, and what their attitude is to be towards each other.

### Chapter 15

In chapter 15 we read of the importance of unity between Gentile and Jew, and then of the comfort of God's encouragement. He is the God of endurance, of comfort, of hope, and of peace.

### Chapter 16

Finally, we have greetings to individual believers, the assurance of final victory in our struggles: 'the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly' (v. 20). Then we have the final doxology, which is the pattern in all four parts of the epistle. Each part ends with a doxology. At the end of the first two parts, we read a doxology to the praise of God's *love*. This one, as the third one, is a doxology to the praise of God's *wisdom*.

## Section four and the rest of the book

I do not have the time to consider with you all the individual details in these chapters. What I would like to do is to show how this fourth section integrates with the rest of the book.

	1. Romans 1:1–5:11	4. Romans 12:1–16:27
<b>The Body</b>	Their bodies dishonoured (1:24).	Present your bodies (12:1).
<b>The Mind</b>	Depraved mind (1:28).	Transformed by the renewing of your mind (12:2).
<b>Motivation</b>	Neither gave thanks (1:21).	I exhort you by the mercies of God (12:1)
<b>Service</b>	Worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator (1:25).	A living sacrifice . . . acceptable to God . . . your spiritual service (12:1).
<b>God's Wrath</b>	The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (1:18). We shall be saved from the wrath (5:9).	A minister of God, an avenger for wrath . . . therefore . . . submit . . . not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience sake (13:4–5).
<b>Faith</b>	Abraham was strengthened in his faith (4:20).	Him that is weak in faith (14:1).
<b>God's Judgment</b>	So that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world be accountable to God—liable to God's punishment (3:19).	We shall all stand before God's judgment seat . . . every tongue will confess to God . . . each of us will give an account of himself to God (14:10–12).
<b>Christ's Death</b>	While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (5:8).	Christ died, and lived again, that he might be Lord (14:9).
<b>Jew–Gentile</b>	Abraham, father of believers . . . uncircumcised . . . and circumcised (4:11–12).	Christ a minister of the circumcision . . . and that the Gentiles might glorify God (15:8–9).



### The major themes of section one

I have listed for you items chosen from the first part of the book where Paul points out that those who reject God and the evidence of the Creator eventually come to dishonour their bodies (1:24). He points out how God gives them over to a depraved mind (v. 28).

He further points out how their motivation is perverted; they were not grateful; they didn't give things to God (v. 21). If you are an atheist and you don't believe in a personal God, and you believe it all happened originally from a bit of slime, it's very difficult. It's difficult to be grateful to a bit of slime, or to say your prayers and thank evolution. And gratitude for the wonders of creation is something common to the human heart. If you refuse the Creator it becomes impossible to be grateful in that sense.

They 'worshiped and *served* the creature rather than the Creator' (v. 25). The Greek verb for 'served' is *latreuo*. So the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (v. 18), though chapter 5 reminds us that we believers shall be saved from the wrath (v. 9). And then, citing the case of Abraham, as we remember, chapter 4 says that he was strengthened in his faith (v. 20).

Chapter 3 says that the point of the law is that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world come under the judgment of God (v. 19). Christ's death is mentioned: 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (5:8). And the question of Jew and Gentile is raised. Jew and Gentile must be saved and justified on exactly the same grounds (4:11–12).

### The major themes of section one and their effects in section four

So that is what the first major part of the Epistle to the Romans says. Pray notice now the effect of salvation and justification and sanctification. In the fourth major part of the epistle we see the expected effect on the believer.

First is the effect on his body. Instead of dishonouring our bodies, we are to 'present our bodies . . . holy, acceptable to God' (12:1).

And our minds? Instead of being delivered over to a depraved mind under the judgment of God, we are to be 'transformed by the renewing of our minds' (v. 2). We constantly need new ideas, not out of the blue, but out of God's word, so that our minds are renewed.

And our motivation? It is said of the sinners in chapter 1 that they did not give thanks. Our motivation is this: 'I beseech you by the mercies of God' (v. 1).

As to service, the ungodly worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. Salvation by faith—justification, sanctification—ought to lead to this: a living sacrifice, a vigorous sacrifice, which is your spiritual, your logical—the word is to be translated—*service*. It is the same word. Here it is in the noun. In the first section it was in the verb: they 'worshiped and *served*'.

The topic of God's wrath is reverted to in chapter 13: the government is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath. Therefore submit not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience sake (vv. 4–5).

Abraham was strengthened in his faith (4:20). Abraham's faith did wobble occasionally, but in the course of life it was strengthened (14:1). In this final part of Romans we come to a long discussion because of the fact that there are some whose faith is weak, though they are

believers; and there are other believers whose faith is strong. The issue is how they are to treat each other.

In the first section, we are told of God's judgment. We are told that in his judgment every mouth may be stopped, may be silenced, and the whole world be accountable to God — liable to God's punishment. Thank God, we are delivered. We shall be saved from the wrath (5:9). There is now, therefore, no condemnation (8:1). But do remember: 'we shall all stand before God's judgment seat . . . every tongue will confess to God . . . each of us will give an account of himself to God' (14:10–12), as God enquires what we did, and why we did it, and surveys our works.

That can be a serious thing, as 1 Corinthians 3 reminds us. Our work shall be tried by the fire of Christ's criticism, and if our works survive, we shall receive a reward and our work shall abide. There are two things then: what we've done abiding for eternity, plus a reward which will take the form of further work. You remember the story of the talents. The man used ten talents (or pounds or whatever they were): he was rewarded with ten cities. Well, it's a job enough and full-time work to administer ten pounds, maybe. It would take a lot more work to administer ten *cities*! If you don't want to be busy in eternity, don't work for the Lord now whatever you do. But then in heaven everybody will want to work, and the more work, the more wonderful it will be, where nobody gets tired anyway.

Yes, we will stand before the judgment seat of God for him to examine our works. If our works are burned up, we ourselves shall be saved, says the apostle (1 Cor 3:15), because salvation was never dependent on our works. If the works are burned up, we shall ourselves be saved, 'but so as by fire', like Lot escaping out of the flames of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And then, of course, there is the question of Christ's death. In the first part it was, 'while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (5:8), so that we can be saved from the wrath of God through him. But in this fourth part of the epistle, 'Christ died, and lived again'. What for? 'That he might be Lord' (14:9). That is another aspect of the death of Christ, isn't it? We need to embrace them all.

Then there is the question looming large in the first part, where Paul asserts that Jews and Gentiles have to be saved on exactly the same ground (4:11–12). If that is true in the gospel, it has very big practical implications between the practical relationships of Jews and Gentiles in the church. And if we preach a gospel in which Jews and Gentiles are saved on exactly the same ground, then Paul exhorts his fellow believers that they must be very careful not to force divisions in the church between Jew and Gentile by their behaviour (15:8–9).

So then my point is made, if I can show you how the practical section is related here to the first section. This is an integral whole. The message of salvation works, and because it works then it may be shown to work; and we must behave in our practical life, and in the life of the church, on the basis of what we preach in the gospel.

### **The connection between sections three and four**

Let me go further than that if I may, and show you the connection between section three and the final section.

<b>Section 3</b> 9:1–11:36	<b>Section 4</b> 12:1–16:27
FAILURE OF ISRAEL'S FAITH AND SERVICE	APPEAL FOR OUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE
Christ is the end of the law for righteousness	Love is the fulfilment of the law
Jew/Gentile relations	Jew/Gentile relations
ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED	NOW IS OUR SALVATION NEARER
'Life from the dead'	'The day is at hand', 'Satan bruised'
THE WISDOM OF GOD (11:33–36)	THE ONLY WISE GOD (16:27)

In part three, we were considering Israel's failure. They were chosen to be a testimony for God, and given the glory—the very presence of God, and the service of God. They had that sacred ministry, given to them in the tabernacle and the temple—'the *service* of God' (9:4) to be a witness to the Gentiles, and they failed miserably. You will see the strong appeal when you relate section three to section four. 'I beseech you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to yield your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is your reasonable *service*' (see 12:1). It is the exact same word (*latreia*) in both verses. It is possible for us so to behave, in spite of the mercies of God, that we fail in that very thing and fail as a testimony to the world instead of our service of God being a testimony for him.

Notice the difference between what he says about the law in each section. In part three Paul says, 'Christ is the end of the law' to those who are in Christ Jesus. He is the end of the law for righteousness (10:4). Now, do understand what that means. He is the *goal* of the law. He is the *end* in the sense of *goal*. You can come to understand that if you read Paul at the end of Galatians 3. The law was our *schoolmaster* if you like, or *pedagogue* unto Christ. That was the point of the law—to make the Jew aware in the end that he needed a saviour, and therefore to prepare him for the coming of Christ. It is not the end of the law so we don't need to take any more notice of the law. The second major part of Romans informs us believers it is the purpose of God that 'the righteous demand of the law should be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (see 8:4). It is not that we are saved by keeping the law, but it is the law showing us our sinfulness and leading us to Christ for salvation and then, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the power to fulfil the demands of the law. And how would you go about doing that? Well, 'love is the fulfilment of the law' (13:10).

Now, pray notice what that doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that so long as you are lovey-dovey, and you love everybody, that is fulfilling the law. There have been great philosophical systems of ethics built on that false premise. The result can be saying, 'If you really love somebody, then fornication doesn't matter. It might be the right thing to do, and so too would adultery. It is difficult to prove that murder would be right, but who knows?'

It doesn't mean that. It means that the law commands you to do: this, this, this and the other, and the true love of Christ will lead you to do that. For the law is summed up in two principles. The first is: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength' (see Deut 6:5; Mark 12:30). That doesn't mean, 'So long as I love you, Lord, I can do as I like.' If you really love the Lord you will keep his commandments, as our Lord pointed out (John 14:15). And the second principle is that you shall 'love your neighbour as yourself'

(Lev 19:18; Mark 12:31). In practical terms, therefore, love will lead us to the fulfilment of the law.

In the third part, as we have now seen, Paul talks about Jews and Gentiles and the relation between them when it comes to salvation. Now in this fourth part, the question of Jewish–Gentile relationship crops up again. ‘*All Israel shall be saved*’ says part three, pointing forward to the future (11:26). And in part four, advising us how we ought to behave, we are reminded our salvation is nearer than when we believed (13:11). To go further than that, let me put here some further details comparing parts three and four.

<b>3. Romans 9:1–11:36</b> <b>Jew–Gentile relations</b>	<b>4. Romans 12:1–16:27</b> <b>Jew–Gentile relations</b>
<p>Paul’s ministry: inasmuch as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my office, in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to jealousy and save some of them (11:13–14).</p> <p>... their loss, the riches of the Gentiles ... you became partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree ... glory not over the branches ... (11:12, 17–18).</p> <p>... not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles ... I will call that my people which was not my people (9:24–25).</p>	<p>Paul’s ministry: ... that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles ... that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable ... that my ministration for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints (15:16, 31).</p> <p>... and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister to them in material things (15:27).</p> <p>... Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people (15:8–13).</p>

In part three, he is talking about his office, and he says, ‘Inasmuch as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my office in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to jealousy and save some of them’ (see 11:13–14). In part four he talks again about the relation of Jews and Gentiles. He uses a marvellous expression: ‘that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles ... that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable’ (15:16). He is going out to get Gentiles converted and offering them to God, so to speak, as a sacrifice, as a gift through his labours. And he asks the believers to pray ‘that my ministration for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints’ (vv. 30–31). He was an apostle to the Gentiles, but because he was a Jew and wanted to comfort the Jews’ hearts, he organized a collection of money from the Gentile believers to be sent to Jerusalem, particularly after the famine there, as a token of the oneness of Gentiles and Jews, and of the gratitude of Gentiles towards the Jews, so that Jew and Gentile might be cemented together. And Paul was statesman enough to see what a colossal danger there was here that the gospel of Jesus Christ would be preached, and the Gentiles would believe and some Jews would believe but they wouldn’t agree among themselves; and so there should arise two forms of Christianity, which would be an utter scandal in the world. Paul bent every muscle in his body to stop that happening. The grievousness of true believers who won’t touch each other; what a sorry testimony it is to the world.

Then of course the Jewish loss has been the riches of the Gentiles. As you become partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree, don't boast over them (11:12, 17–18). On the other side, the Gentiles are debtors indeed. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister to them in material things (15:27). This is Paul the statesman now, talking to the Christian churches, and particularly to the Gentile churches, and to his Jewish brethren. His intention is that the Gentiles shall show their gratitude to the Jew and hence cement the worldwide unity in Christ of believers, be they Jew or Gentile.

And, finally, there is the connection across both sections from the prophets, as you see in the chart.

So, thus far, a few suggestions to make the point that the practical things now said in the final section of the epistle are not to be viewed separately, as though they were just tacked on at the end. They are the outflowing, in a practical sense, of the truth of the gospel.

## **Some key points from section four**

### **Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's**

We are called upon to be statesmen in our day amongst the people of God, like Paul was, to do our very best to promote the unity of the people of God. We are not to fall out over stupid little things. So you see in chapter 14 'the weak' and 'the strong'. Here we have to make a careful distinction between what Paul is talking about in chapter 14, and what he talks about in 1 Corinthians 8.

In 1 Corinthians 8 the question is: Is it right to eat meat offered to idols? And, of course, there is a sense in which idolatry is the basic sin of all sins. Therefore there are situations in which Paul must tell believers that they must not join in the eating of meat offered to idols. There are other occasions when it doesn't matter. Being offered to idols hasn't altered the quality of the meat. So long as it is not in active engagement in the temple restaurant (eating food just recently offered to idols and being, therefore, a partaker in their ceremony), but, if you'd bought meat in the marketplace and you didn't know where it came from, you shouldn't ask any questions. Eat it in your home, and that's that. But if anybody were to point out to you: 'This is offered to idols', you are not to eat it, because here the honour of God is concerned. We are not to provoke God to jealousy; for if we do, we shall learn he is stronger than we are, and he will deal with us (see vv. 1–13).

So the question of eating meat offered to idols is a very serious matter. This is not that. In Romans 14 it is a different question. As he says, 'One man has faith to eat all things, but he that is weak eats only vegetables' (see v. 2). It is marvellous how things like that have divided God's people down the centuries. And Paul now tells the weak and the strong how they are to behave: 'Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains' (v. 3 ESV). It is typical of one with a strong conscience who can eat anything to look down and despise his poor little brother who has a weak conscience and only eats turnips, or something. He is *despising* him. The danger of the weak brother is that he *judges*. 'Let not him that eats not, judge him that eats, for God has received him' (v. 3).

These are the two tendencies—the strong to despise the weak and the weak to judge the strong. ‘Don’t do either’, says Paul, and he now enunciates what must be the guiding principle in these things where God’s word doesn’t say what to do. Do you know any place in the New Testament or elsewhere where it says you may eat turnips and not cabbages, or something like it? No. The guiding principle must be that whatever we do, in word or deed, we shall do all ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus’ (see Col 3:17), and we shall do it ‘to the Lord’ (see 1 Cor 10:31). This is the principle he enunciates now:

One man esteems one day above another: another esteems every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord: and he that eats, eats unto the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he that eats not, unto the Lord he eats not, and gives God thanks. For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself. (Rom 14:5–7)

Paul isn’t calling out against living as isolated things. He is saying that whatever we do has to be done unto the Lord: we don’t ‘live to ourselves’.

So in things great and small we have to consider when we are about to do something: ‘I’m about to do this. I have no specific command in Scripture that tells me I should or I shouldn’t. Do I judge it is pleasing to the Lord?’ That is the principle. And if I decide it’s okay to eat meat, I must decide that before the Lord, and to the Lord I eat it and give thanks. If I decide I don’t think the Lord would have me eat meat, well, to the Lord I don’t eat it, then.

Now, here is an exceedingly important principle: ‘whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died, and lived again, that he might be Lord over both the dead and the living’ (see vv. 8–9). We heard that Christ died for the ungodly and will save us from the wrath of God. We heard that we died with Christ. Now we are told another thing about the death of Christ. He died ‘so that he might be Lord’, and that means Lord of everything. We are to remember that one day, as Paul points out now, we shall stand before the Lord and he will call us to account (v. 10). If the Lord calls me to an account and says, ‘Gooding, do you know, old chap, you ate that bit of pork steak, didn’t you?’

And I would say, ‘Yes, I did, Lord. I’m afraid I did.’

‘And when you ate it, Gooding, you thought really, in your heart of hearts, it was wrong, didn’t you, and you thought it wouldn’t please me.’

‘Well, that’s true, Lord, I did. That’s really what I did think.’

‘But you went and ate it? You see, Gooding, it is the fact that I cancelled the food laws. Remember what I said in Mark 7 and Matthew 15, and what I said to Paul in 1 Corinthians? It was okay, as Christians, to eat pork. Remember from Acts 10 the lesson I had to teach Peter when I let down that sheet from heaven full of all sorts of crunchy things and thereby declared all meats clean? It actually wouldn’t have been sinful. That isn’t the point, Gooding. At that moment you thought it was sinful, didn’t you? You *thought* it was wrong, and you *thought* it would displease me, and yet you went and did it. That’s the point at issue.’

He will call me to an account. And if I say, ‘Well, yes, Lord, I’m sorry I went and did it.’

‘Why did you do it, Gooding?’

'Well, there was this Harry Smith, and he said I was a silly little fellow and a narrow minded little urchin, and I'd got these funny ideas in my head. He said, "It's okay to eat pork, so eat pork!" And he made me feel such a fool in front of all the other guests that I ate it.'

'Oh, it was Harry Smith, was it? And who is Harry Smith? Did he die for you, that he should overbear your conscience?'

That is the issue at stake, and I must live as someone who must give account of himself to the risen Lord for what I have done, for he records the workings of our hearts and our minds, and our secrets.

It is, in that sense, a very good thing that our risen Lord has not given us six hundred and thirteen commandments, like the Jews say they have, so that we just look in the rule book. There are things where the Bible doesn't say this or that. Of course, where the Bible does say *this*, then I must listen to the Bible and do what the Bible says. Where it says I'm not to do *this*, I must listen to it. We are talking now about the one hundred and one thousand things about which the Bible doesn't give any particular rule. It is a very good thing, for that makes me say, 'Well, now I've got to decide, but I must decide before the Lord—"as unto the Lord", so that when I stand before Christ and he says, "Why did you do it?" I can honestly say, "Lord, I thought it would please you, anyway. I thought it was okay to do it. Sorry if I did wrong. I really thought it was pleasing to you."'

That is what we shall be called upon to answer. I must be very careful lest I overbear your conscience and you, my dear brother, must be very careful not to overbear my conscience.

So chapter 15 tells us about the one that is weak in the faith because of these things. What are we to do with him? We are to receive him as God received us (v. 7). That is not talking about simply entertaining other believers in our homes. This is written in the Epistle to the Romans—the great exposition of the gospel. How has God received us through Christ, whether we are Jew or Gentile? On what ground has he received us? Romans gives one unified answer: he has received us as bankrupt sinners on the basis of the work of Christ, and has justified Jew and Gentile—all his people—on the same ground. If the gospel says that Christ has so received us, that God has so received us, we must see to it that our practice with one another is based on the very foundation of that gospel.

You will mention before me cases of exception, of course you will. When a believer persists in behaviour that casts doubt upon his profession of faith and is a scandal upon the gospel, then there has to be healthy church discipline. We are talking here about small things, about which there is no commandment, and the basis upon which we receive people. It is to be on the basis that God has received us, not according to our knowledge, but on the basis of our faith in Christ.

### **Paul's desire for Christian unity**

So Paul goes on to talk to them. He is an apostle to the Gentiles, but he didn't found the church at Rome. Paul's letters are normally written to churches that he has founded, and because he founded them he is not inhibited in talking to them. But he didn't found the church at Rome; it was in existence even before Paul got converted. But he writes to those who are Gentiles; and how gracious he is: 'I hope to come to you and be helped by my dear brothers' (see 15:24). He does not say, 'I'm the apostle, and I'll put you in order!' He says, 'I hope to be helped by

you and be profited spiritually be you' (see 1:12). And he says, 'Oh you should pray for me; I've got a difficult task, and in particular I'd like you to pray for this. The Gentiles, after my suggestions, have got together a sum of money to send to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem, and I'm going to take it there. I'd like you Gentile Christians to pray for me.'

What for?

'That this offering of money from the Gentile believers to the Jewish believers may be accepted by the Jewish believers' (see 15:31–32).

You say, 'What does that mean? Was he afraid that the Jewish believers wouldn't accept it?'

It could have happened, couldn't it? They might have said, 'This is Gentile money! Filthy money! We're not going to accept it.' What a stab in the heart of Christian unity that would have been in those early days. So he asks the Roman believers to pray that this gathering together of money sent by the Gentile churches to the Jews to cement their unity would be acceptable to the Jews. Here is Paul the statesman, and what is almost his final word is: 'mark them that cause division *contrary to the Christian doctrine*' (see 16:17). Yes, we see this is not unrelated to what has gone before—the great statement of the gospel that says we are all alike, Jews and Gentiles, under the condemnation and wrath of God and can be saved solely as bankrupt sinners through Christ; and in Christ God has received us, whether Jew or Gentile. That is to be worked out in practice, in the practical relationships between the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers and in the predominantly Jewish churches and in the predominantly Gentile churches.

## Conclusion

Now our time is up. Crudely though I have done it, I have perhaps made enough of my point in this last section. I have laboured to try and show that the practical exhortations in these very practical chapters are not arbitrary. They are an integral part of the gospel that Paul preaches here in this epistle as he writes to his fellow believers in Rome.

Shall we pray.

Our Father, we bless thee from our hearts for choosing out the Apostle Paul as an example to us—a vessel of thy mercy—an example to us who subsequently have believed on the Lord Jesus to salvation. We bless thee for him, for his labours to which, ultimately, we owe our very salvation, we who are Gentiles. And for these wonderful letters that thy Spirit inspired him to write, for them too we thank thee, and for the glories of the salvation that he preaches; that even as with our little grasp we have contemplated them, move our hearts to worship thee for thine abounding love and for thy divine wisdom. We thank thee for what understanding that thou has given us thus far of thy great gospel.

We pray for our Jewish friends. Have mercy on them we pray. Hasten the day when Israel as a whole shall be saved. We bemoan before thee Christendom's attitude that has inclined Jews to believe that the Christians were responsible for



the gas chambers of Germany, for the inquisitions in Spain, for the oppression in England under King John. Oh what a sad misrepresentation of the gospel of Christ that has been. We pray for Israel's restoration. We pray, Lord, for wisdom if thou should give us the opportunity, of how to spread thy gospel sympathetically to Jews.

And we pray now as, exhorted by thy word, we yet again present our bodies to thee, to be a living, vigorous sacrifice, acceptable to thee. Help us, Lord, to renew our minds diligently and systematically and continuously, through thy word and the ministry of thy gracious Holy Spirit. Impress on our hearts that one day we must stand before the Saviour who died that he might be our Lord. Help us, we pray, to live in life's details intent on pleasing him. Forgive us where so often we come short.

And bless us now as we think, Lord, of our day and generation. We thank thee for this apostle who came out to us Gentiles. Help us, Lord, in our day, to take up the torch of the gospel and not be content with our private understanding but to branch out to the endless Gentiles around us that are without God and without Christ, and so without hope in the world.

Bless us Lord, then, as now we depart. Help us to reflect upon thy word, that it may mature in our hearts and souls, and bring forth its fruit in good time in the salvation of others and in the glory of Christ, in whose name we ask these things. Amen.

## Questions and Answers Session Four

### *Questions From Throughout Romans*

#### **Question one**

*A question is sometimes raised concerning the justice of God, since it is not just to punish an innocent party instead of the guilty. I have tried to understand this issue by thinking through Romans 5:8: 'But God commends his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' If you were to change the names of the people involved you could come up with a sentence like: 'Bill loved Jill so much that Ted died for her', which wouldn't make a lot of sense. If you transpose the names of 'God' and 'Christ' to some other names it would sound very strange. However, 'God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us', is not nonsense, because Christ is God as well as our kinsman-redeemer. Do you think this is a correct response?*

DWG: Yes, I would say it hits the nail on the head very well. It is the fact that Christ is not a third party. He is our representative. But, secondly, Christ is the Son of God. We shall not understand the cross of Christ and what was happening there if we fail to get our Christology right. That is, Jesus is God incarnate. And therefore what transpired there was transpiring between members of the Godhead. 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son' (John 3:16). It certainly isn't a question of God, in that sense, punishing a third party. On neither count is that true. Becoming a man, a representative man therefore—he is the second man; and for all those that are 'in him' his death counts as our death because he is the head of the new race. Secondly, on God's side, this was happening between the members of the Godhead. So, 'Yes,' is my answer. This is a very good response.

#### **Question two**

*Isn't a mediator acting as a third party? We are told in Scripture that 'there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim 2:5). How would you bring that into the answer just given?*

DWG: Well, yes, that is right. And I would bring in what you've said in a roundabout way. First, I would appeal to Galatians 3.

What then is the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise has been made; and it was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one. (vv. 19–20)

So the first half of verse 20 is making your point precisely. A mediator implies two parties, and someone going between them. A mediator is not 'of one'; he is a mediator between two parties. And if you go back to Exodus and Moses, when the law was ordained, Moses acted as the intermediary. That is, God gave him the conditions; he gave him the law—the basis of the covenant. Moses wrote the conditions down in a book. He not only rehearsed the conditions to the people, but he read the conditions out of the book so that all might see it was written down. (They couldn't afterwards say, 'Oh, but we didn't think it meant that!') And then he put these to the people. He acted as the mediator. It was not God who took the blood of the animals and put it in a basin. It was Moses that sprinkled both the people and the book. He acted as an intermediary between God and the people. And that makes your point then: you have two parties.

Why does that not apply to our Lord when in Hebrews 8 he is the 'mediator'?

But now has he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted upon better promises. (v. 6)

He is a mediator, so why does this idea of a third-party not apply? It is for two very good reasons, among others. Reason one is that the new covenant is not a two-party covenant. And what I mean is this. A two-party covenant is when you get two parties, and they both have something to fulfil. The mediator negotiates, and when the covenant is made both parties bind themselves to do certain things, to fulfil certain conditions. Both parties do it: 'You do this; I will do this'. It is a two-party covenant.

Suppose you are going to get yourself a new house built. So you ask the builder to build it; you specify the quality and the quantities of the stuff and so on. He agrees to do that. He will build it to your specifications. He, on the other hand, lays down certain conditions, notably that it will cost you £500,000! And if you sign this agreement you are both responsible. If you fulfil your part but he doesn't, that breaks the covenant. If he fulfils his part and you don't fulfil yours, that breaks the covenant. That is a two-party covenant.

The law was a two-party covenant. God put down his conditions upon which he would bless them and they would be his people. The people responded, 'And we will keep all those conditions'. On that principle it was a two-party agreement, with a mediator between. The new covenant is not that. The new covenant is more like a will, a 'Last Will and Testament'. In fact, Hebrews 9 uses the term. The word for covenant that the Bible uses in the New Testament is *diatheke*. And *diatheke*, strictly speaking, isn't 'covenant', though it is used sometimes in that connotation. It is a *testament*; it is a *disposition*. If your Uncle Sam in America loves you, and he goes and dies, and then in his will he leaves you all his bonds, securities and preferential shares, two or three summer houses and his ranch, and all that stuff, and he has it signed, sealed, settled and witnessed, but lays down no conditions—you don't have to do anything for it. It is, in that sense, a covenant—a *diatheke*. It doesn't need a mediator. It is just yours, if you would like to have it. You've got to believe it, of course, and take it.

The new covenant is a one-party covenant. If you look at its terms, it doesn't require you to do anything. It says what God will do. It is a one-sided covenant. Now, Christ is the mediator in the sense that, through his death, he signed, sealed and settled it. The blood had to be shed, and so the proposition that the Godhead made, that we should be forgiven, he had

to enact it and fulfil it, and for our sakes he died for us. Yes, but he is not mediating in the sense that he is getting us and God, and he mediates between us, and we both have conditions to fulfil. In that sense, it is a different kind of a covenant. It is 'of one', for Christ is acting as the Son of God, putting the covenant into effect.

In that sense, 1 Timothy 2:5 says that the man Christ Jesus is a mediator between God and men. That is true again: he comes between us to bring us together, but it is the conditions upon which he does it that is the point. He is the one who, being God, became man that he might bring both together, but not in the sense of mediating between the two of us so that we eventually arrive at conditions: we on our side, and God on his side.

If that is enough to satisfy you on your question, then let me add that, when it comes to the new covenant, our Lord is not only the mediator of it; he is the *guarantor* of it. And that is said in Hebrews 7:22—'By so much also has Jesus become the guarantor of a better covenant.' How can you be a mediator if you are a guarantor? Well, because the covenant is a one-sided covenant, a one-party covenant. Secondly, our Lord is the guarantor that all its conditions shall be fulfilled. He is the surety.

### Question three

*The new covenant spoken of in Jeremiah 31 was with Israel, with the house of Israel, and not with us who are Gentiles. Can you elaborate on your reasons for saying that the new covenant is for us Christians who are Gentiles?*

DWG: I would agree one hundred percent with the proposition that the covenant as given by God through Jeremiah was to be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 'Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . .' (31:31). I have no objection to stressing that that means, 'with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah'. I believe it absolutely.

### When was the promise of the new covenant fulfilled?

My first question would be: when was the covenant actually set up? When was that promise fulfilled: 'I will make a covenant . . .'? When was the covenant *made*? That would be the question I would then ask. When did it cease to be a *promise*, and was passed into *law*?

*Translating Hebrews 8:6*

The answer to that seems to my mind to be, without any doubt whatsoever, found in Hebrews 8:6: 'But now has he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which [now notice the next verb and its tense] *has been* enacted upon better promises.' It is not true to Scripture to say (here in the present in the year 2005) that 'God will now in the future make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah', because Scripture says he has done it already. The new covenant *has been* enacted. Now, I don't know what your translations say? What do they say there?

AUDIENCE: 'is enacted' (ESV).

AUDIENCE: 'which was established' (KJV).

AUDIENCE: 'it is founded' (ISV).

AUDIENCE: 'has been enacted' (NASB).

AUDIENCE: 'Mr Darby has: "which is established".'

DWG: Yes, yes, yes. Amen. A great scholar was Mr Darby, but you should remember that he was a Victorian. Though I am not a Victorian, I was brought up much nearer his time than you were. The uses of English then sometimes deceive modern members of the British race. In older English the perfect tense of a verb is often expressed with the present tense of the verb 'to be' as the auxiliary. What do I mean by that? If you say, 'the covenant is enacted', in older English you were saying what now in modern English we would say, 'the covenant has been enacted'.

Does anybody here admit to having learned French at school (or to having made an endeavour, or the appearance of having done so)? The French for 'I have come', is *je suis venu*—'I am come'. That is good French. With certain verbs, you use the verb 'to be' for the perfect, whereas for other things you would use the verb 'to have': *j'ai jeté*—'I have thrown'. But with other verbs you use the verb 'to be' as the perfect, as in 'I am come'.

Now listen to Martha talking to Mary in good old Authorized English: 'the Master is come and calleth for thee,' (John 11:28), meaning in modern English, 'the teacher has come'. Or listen to the Authorized Version in Romans 6: 'our old man is crucified' (v. 6). And some energetic preachers have used the verse to exhort us to keep on crucifying our old man, thinking that 'is crucified' means it is constantly being crucified. No, no! The Greek tense is past. What the Authorized means by 'our old man is crucified' is old English for what we would now say in modern English, 'our old man has been crucified'. It is not that the Authorized is incorrect there. It is good old English; but it is old English. The modern equivalent of it is, 'our old man has been crucified'. The old English, 'our old man is crucified' is a past tense: it is a perfect tense. 'I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse' (Song 5:1). 'I am come'? I don't think you say that when you arrive home: 'I am come home, my dear!' I think not.

So when Mr Darby says, 'which is established,' he is a good Englishman using the present tense of the verb 'to be' for a perfect tense. That is good English, though it is grievously misunderstood in modern English by people who never did learn the old English to start with. But let me quote Hebrews 8:6 to you, if I may:

But now he has obtained . . .

Perfect tense: *tetychen*.

a ministry the more excellent, inasmuch as he is the mediator of a better covenant, which . . .

And the Greek verb is *nenomothetētai*. It is a perfect passive tense of the verb *nomotheteo*, and it means 'to lay down in law'.

Now, our Prime Minister has ideas, of course, but he has this particular idea, so he gets a 'bill' as you would call it, and a bill is presented to Parliament. It is not law yet; it is only a bill. It won't become law until Parliament votes on it. And if a majority vote for it, then it passes into law. So it is then no longer merely a promise; it passes into law. It is no longer merely a

suggestion; it now passes into law. That process, *nomotheteo*—laying it down as a law—is what the Greek is talking about. And this new covenant 'has been', says the Greek—perfect passive of the verb—'has been passed into law'.

### *Making covenants*

If you doubt that, consider how in the Old Testament covenants were formed. Read in Genesis 15 again about the covenant God made with Abraham. The covenant was not just a promise; the covenant guaranteed the promise. The covenant was made when the covenant sacrifice was offered. So Abraham was told to take some animals and some birds and cut them in pieces and put them in two rows (that was one way they had of doing it in those days). The covenant was made when those who were party to the covenant (in the sense that they had conditions to fulfil) walked between the pieces. So Abraham killed the animals, and he cut them apart. He didn't divide the birds, but he put them in two rows. 'In that day God made a covenant with him' (v. 18). And the presence of God walking between the two rows was indicated by a great fire and flame and so forth, walking between the pieces. Abraham didn't walk between the pieces (he was fast asleep); but God walked. The covenant was made when the covenant victims were killed and sacrificed.

There can't be a covenant, says Hebrews 9:17, without the death of the covenant maker. When was the *new covenant* made? Yes, when the covenant sacrifice was offered. Hence the Hebrew phrase, 'you cut a covenant'. And the Epistle to the Hebrews is telling you straight that it was Christ by his blood who made the new covenant. Listen to him; compare him with Moses. Moses took the blood of the covenant sacrifices and put it in a basin. He sprinkled both the book and the people. He said, 'this is the blood of the covenant which God is making with you'—a sacrifice offered (see Exod 24:8). And Christ took the cup and said, 'This is my blood of the new covenant' (see Matt 26:28). What do you mean by 'the blood of the covenant'? Well, the blood of the covenant that signs, seals and settles and sets up the covenant. 'This is the cup of the new covenant,' he says.

So, if you ask me, 'was the covenant to be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah?' I say, Amen, absolutely so. When was it made? It was made when the covenant sacrifice was offered; that is, when our Lord died at Calvary, which he himself points out. As you come to the Lord's Supper, Christ will, so to speak, offer you the cup and tell you what it is. We read it in 1 Corinthians 11:25, which is talking to a Gentile church. Every time he hands you the cup, our Lord says, 'this is the new covenant in my blood'.

### *Forgiveness on the ground of the new covenant*

Now, a third line on these matters. Consider the Hebrews, to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. Could we all agree that they were Hebrews? I don't think that is stretching anybody's imagination. They were Hebrews—Jews, therefore. We don't know which particular Jews. It could have been people like Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Paul, Peter, James, John, Philip, Matthew, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and a good many more besides. Can we agree they were forgiven? By the time the writer wrote to them, they were believers and had been forgiven. On what ground were they forgiven? Was it on the ground of the sacrifices of the old covenant, or the sacrifice of the new covenant? Does anybody here vote for the idea that these Jews, these Hebrews—Martha, Mary, John, Peter, Jude and company—were

forgiven on the ground of the old covenant? I think not! The whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews is telling you they weren't. That old covenant, with its tabernacle, animal sacrifices and ordinary human priesthood was finished!

Look at Hebrews 8:13. 'In that he says "a new covenant . . ."' We had better get that right too. Does your translation read here: 'he will make old the first one'? Does anybody admit to having a translation that says, 'he has made old the first one'? What does the Authorized say? 'He hath made old'. Yes, 'he hath made old'. It is a Greek perfect tense, like that other verb we discussed: 'it has passed into law'. So here, 'he has made old the first one. And that which is waxing old and getting aged is nigh unto vanishing away' (see v. 13). It was indeed. The temple was still there in AD 64 when this letter is likely to have been written. Six years later the Romans would destroy it and the priesthood would be gone forever, and the sacrifices were gone forever.

'He has made it old', and those Hebrews that have forgiveness, they were forgiven on the basis of the new covenant. How do we know that? Because the Holy Spirit says so in chapter 10. They have forgiveness so much so that they don't need to offer any further sacrifices:

For by one offering he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us: for after he has said, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws on their heart, and upon their mind also will I write them'; then he says, 'And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more'. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin (vv. 14–18).

The writer to these Hebrews says: 'You have complete forgiveness of sins, so much so that you don't need to offer anything at all in order to get forgiveness of sins. There is no more process of offering to get forgiveness of sins.'

How is that?

'Well, the Holy Spirit is witness to you. Listen to what he says: "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more".'

That is the new covenant. Now, therefore, see the force of this part of the reasoning. Martha, Mary, John, Jude, Matthew, Thomas, Philip and all the rest of them — by this time there were some thousands of them. Three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost, largely Jews. A few days later, the number had risen to five thousand — all Jews. On what ground were they forgiven? It couldn't be on the ground of the old covenant. Well, on what ground then? The chapter is telling you: on the grounds of the new covenant. And they were Jews!

Listen to Paul in Romans: 'Do you suppose God had thrust away his ancient people whom he foreknew? He certainly hasn't!' (see 11:1). How do you know that, Paul? He says, 'I am one!' Not, 'I was an Israelite,' but 'I *am* an Israelite'. Would it be wrong for Paul to say, 'The Lord has made his covenant with us Israelites; and on the basis of it I am forgiven'?

You say, 'But that leaves the whole question: what about us Gentiles?'

My final suggestion there is this, and I submit it to your judgment (not to raise up controversies in the house of the Lord, so to speak, but to finish the argument). What about us who are Gentiles and not Israelites (or Judahites for that matter)?

Paul, talking to us Gentiles in Ephesians says:

Wherefore remember, that aforetime you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called 'Uncircumcision' by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that you were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (2:11–12)

'You *were*'. Do you agree with that? Are you now? I have to tell you, you are still Gentiles. Are you now separate from Christ? No!

But now in Christ Jesus you that once were far off are made nigh . . . (v. 13)

You 'were once alienated from the commonwealth of Israel'. Are you still? Well, no, of course not. And you were 'strangers from the covenants of promise'. The new covenant was a covenant of promise, of course: 'I will make a covenant' (Jer 31:31). You were once strangers from it. Are you now? Because you are Gentiles, are you still strangers from the covenants of promise, and therefore from the new covenant? Surely not! In fact, this is what has Paul hopping around his cell in great excitement!

If so be that you have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given to me . . . which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it has now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (see 3:2–6)

So, Gentiles are brought in. Through Christ we are no longer strangers from the covenants of promise.

At least, that is what I believe. I submit it to your good judgment, so that you will ponder these things; because unfortunately, for many a decade now there has been divergence of thought amongst God's people about this. And godly men (many more godly than I am) have held the opposite view: that the new covenant is yet to be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. They say that when the promise says, 'with the house of Israel and the house of Judah', it means 'the house of Israel and the house of Judah'.

I do believe that one hundred percent! My question is: when was it made? And, secondly, at one time we Gentiles were strangers from all that; but we are not now.

But some have said, as even the excellent and revered Mr J. N. Darby, when faced with 2 Corinthians 3 and Paul saying, 'It is God that has made us sufficient [competent] as ministers of a new covenant . . .' (see vv. 5–6) has to say, 'Well, no, not of "the" new covenant but of a thing like the new covenant.' It is because he holds that the new covenant is not yet made, and will be made in the future with Israel, when Israel is restored.

That is a thing that you must make up your own minds about; and whatever you think, don't count me as an enemy, nor even as an incipient apostate from the truth. It is a thing to think about and to pray about. It is a thing of some importance. 'The law written on our hearts', in 2 Corinthians 3:2 is a promise of the new covenant. 'Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more' (Heb 10:17). If you believe it, do notice that it is a promise of the new covenant.



## Appendix: Seminar Handouts

### Overview of the Epistle to the Romans

1. 1:1–5:11	2. 5:12–8:39	3. 9:1–11:36	4. 12:1–16:27
WRATH OF GOD	WRECKAGE OF ADAM'S SIN	FAILURE OF ISRAEL'S FAITH AND SERVICE	APPEAL FOR OUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE
Righteousness apart from the law	Righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in us	Christ is the end of the law for righteousness	Love is the fulfilment of the law
Christ died for us	We died with Christ	Jew/Gentile relations	Jew/Gentile relations
WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD	SAVED IN HOPE	ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED	NOW IS OUR SALVATION NEARER
Hope of the glory of God	Them he also glorified . . . creation delivered	'Life from the dead'	'The day is at hand', 'Satan bruised'
THE LOVE OF GOD (5:5– 11)	THE LOVE OF GOD (8:35–39)	THE WISDOM OF GOD (11:33–36)	THE ONLY WISE GOD (16:27)

## Overview of Section One

*1:1–5:11*

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1. 1:8–3:20 The justification of God's wrath.
  2. 3:21–31 The claim that man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.
  3. 4:1–17 The validation of that claim: an appeal to the precedent of Abraham's experience.
  4. 4:18–25 The definition of what is meant by faith: the analogy between Abraham's faith and ours.
  5. 5:1–11 The results and implications of justification by faith.
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## Comparison of Sections One and Two

*1:1–5:11 and 5:12–8:39*

<b>1:1–5:11</b>	<b>5:12–8:39</b>
<b>1. The diagnosis</b> All personally guilty: ‘without excuse’; ‘every mouth silenced’.	<b>1. The diagnosis</b> Not altogether our fault: ‘through one man’s one act of disobedience, the many constituted sinners’.
<b>2. The death of Christ</b> Christ died for us, while we were still sinners, ungodly, enemies.	<b>2. The death of Christ</b> We died, were crucified with Christ, buried, raised with him. How shall we continue in sin?
<b>3. The law in relation to righteousness and inheritance</b>	<b>3. The law in relation to sanctification</b>
<b>4. The implications of justification by faith</b> The Holy Spirit pours out the love of God in our hearts to make real to us our hope of glory.	<b>4. The implications of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus</b> The Holy Spirit gives life, guides, leads, intercedes for us, in the furtherance of God’s purposes for our glorification, and so strengthens our hope.
WRATH OF GOD. Righteousness apart from the law. Christ died for us.	WRECKAGE OF ADAM’S SIN. Righteous requirement of the law fulfilled in us. We died with Christ.
WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD. Hope of the glory of God.	SAVED IN HOPE. Them also he glorified . . . creation delivered.
THE LOVE OF GOD (5:5–11).	THE LOVE OF GOD (8:35–39).

## **Brief Synopsis of 1:18–5:11**

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### **THE WRATH OF GOD Against all Unrighteousness**

1. 1:20; 2:1; 3:19 Men without excuse.
2. 1:24, 26, 28 God's wrath now: 'God gave them up'.
3. 2:5, 16; 3:5–6 God's wrath and the day of judgment.

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### **Salvation Through THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD Through Faith in Christ Jesus**

1. 3:24 Justified freely—by grace.
2. 3:24 Redemption that is in Christ Jesus.
3. 3:25 Christ Jesus, the propitiatory.
4. 3:25 Through faith, by his blood.
5. 3:26 Through God's righteousness as the justifier.
6. 3:21 Apart from the law.
7. 3:31 Yet establishes the law.



1. 5:1 PEACE with GOD.
  2. 5:2 STANDING in grace.
  3. 5:2 HOPE of the glory of God.
  4. 5:3 EXULTATION in tribulation.
  5. 5:5 GOD'S LOVE poured out in our hearts.
  6. 5:9 SALVATION from the wrath.
  7. 5:11 JOY and EXULTATION IN GOD.
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## Some Facts Regarding Romans 3:25

1. The Old Testament ARK was a chest that contained the tables of the law.
2. The so-called 'mercy-seat' was NOT a seat. It was a lid, or cover, upon which the atoning blood was sprinkled.
3. The word for this cover, or lid, was:
  - a. in Hebrew: *kapporeth*;
  - b. in Greek: *epithema hilasterion*.
4. The word in Romans 3:25 used to describe Christ is *hilasterion*.

## Chapter Four

### *Case-law and Biblical Precedent*

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- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 4:1–8   | 1. The experience of Abraham according to Genesis 15:6: faith is reckoned for righteousness as an act of God’s grace.                 |
|         | 2. The experience of David according to Psalm 32:1–2: iniquities forgiven: righteousness reckoned apart from works; sin not reckoned. |
| 4:9–12  | The relation of the institution of circumcision to justification.   |
| 4:13–16 | The relation of the LAW to the PROMISES.<br>The analogy between:  |
| 4:17–22 | 1. Abraham’s faith;   |
| 4:23–25 | 2. Our faith.   |
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## [A Brief Synopsis of 5:12-8:29](#)

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### **THE DISOBEDIENCE OF ADAM and its Results for all in Adam**

1. Death, dying, dead, mortal, etc. (×42).
  2. Dominion of sin, (5:21; 6:12); of death (5:17); of law (7:1).
  3. Bondage and slavery to sin (6:17); to uncleanness (6:19); to law (7:1); to the law of sin and death (7:23-24; 8:2); to corruption (8:21).
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### **Salvation Through THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST and its Effects for all in Christ**

1. 5:19 By his obedience we are constituted righteous
2. 6:6, 4 Crucified, buried, raised with him
3. 7:4 'Joined to another'
4. 8:1 'In Christ Jesus'



1. LIFE:  
5:17 reigning in  
6:4 newness of  
6:11 to God
  2. FREEDOM:  
6:22 from sin  
6:14; 7:2, 5-6 from law  
8:2 from law of sin and death  
8:21 from corruption
  3. 8:14, 16-17 SONS AND HEIRS of God through the Holy Spirit.
  4. 8:24-25 HOPE
  5. 8:17, 21, 29-30 GLORY
  6. 8:31-39 CONFIDENCE in the love of god
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## **The Logic of Romans 5:12 and 5:18**

### *Difference and Comparison*

#### **The Difference**

1. 'And so' (v. 12) = 'as a result': It expresses a consequence.
2. 'Even so' or 'so also' (v. 18) = 'in the same way': It denotes a comparison.

#### ***An Example***

1. Mr Smith got drunk at a party and, driving home, put his foot on the accelerator instead of on the brake AND SO = AND AS A RESULT crashed into a tree and killed himself.
2. 'EVEN SO' or 'SO ALSO' = IN THE SAME WAY Mr Jones got drunk at a business lunch, signed a bad contract and as a result bankrupted himself.

#### **The Comparison**

**The comparison begins in v. 12 . . .**

Therefore *just as*  
through one man sin entered the world  
and through sin death,  
and *as a consequence*  
death spread to all men because all have sinned . . .

**and it is broken off in vv. 13–17 by a parenthesis;**

**The comparison resumes in v. 18:**

So then *just as*  
through one trespass  
(the result was)  
condemnation . . . upon all men;

*even so, in the same way,*  
through the one act of righteousness  
(the result is)  
justification of life for all men.



## [The Argument of Romans 9](#)

1.	<b>The grievous state of the majority of Paul's kinsmen-according-to-the-flesh in Paul's day</b>	9:1-3
2.	<b>The majesty and effectiveness of the unique role given by God's sovereign choice to Israel, the nation physically descended from Abraham</b>	9:4-5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The adoption as sons: cf. Deuteronomy 32:19-20.</li> <li>b. The GLORY: i.e. the presence of God.</li> <li>c. The covenants (Gen 15:17; Exod 24:7-8; Jer 31:31-34).</li> <li>d. The giving of the law.</li> <li>e. The service of God.</li> <li>f. The promises.</li> <li>g. The fathers.</li> <li>h. The nation through which the Messiah should come physically; who is simultaneously 'over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.'</li> </ul>	
3.	<b>The rejection of the Messiah by the majority of Paul's contemporary Israelites does not mean that God's word and purpose for Israel have come to nothing</b>	9:6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Isaiah prophesied that when God judged Israel, he would nevertheless leave a remnant (9:27-29).</li> <li>b. There is such a remnant now (11:1-6).</li> <li>c. The gifts and calling of God regarding Israel are without repentance i.e. God has not, and will not, change his mind (11:29).</li> <li>d. Therefore one day <i>all Israel</i> shall be saved (11:26).</li> </ul>	
4.	<b>The fact that not all Abraham's physical descendants are chosen by God to carry Israel's unique witness to God, is illustrated by:</b>	9:7-13
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>The case of Isaac, not Ishmael</b> <span style="float: right;">9:7-9</span> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Ishmael was born out of Abraham's own initiative and attempt to fulfil God's promise by his own power.</li> <li>(2) Isaac was born by God's own miraculous power in fulfilment of his promise.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. <b>The case of Jacob and Esau</b> <span style="float: right;">9:10-13</span> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The qualification of Jacob (Israel, Israelites), not Esau (Edomites), as the nation to carry the unique witness to God, was not based on his works, good or bad.</li> <li>(2) If God chose only sinlessly perfect people to be his witnesses, he would never have any.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

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5. **God's mercy on and perseverance with Israel in spite of her sins, and his hardening of Pharaoh, are not unjust nor arbitrary** **9:14–22**
- a. The case of Pharaoh*
- (1) God foreknew that he would harden Pharaoh's heart (Exod 3:19; 7:3).
  - (2) But only at 9:12 is it said that *the Lord* hardened his heart.
  - (3) Pharaoh had demanded evidence. He was given abundant evidence. But when he rejected that evidence, God 'made him stand' as a vessel of wrath.
- b. The case of Israel*
- (1) Israel's frequent apostasies show her to be 'of the same lump' as Pharaoh.
  - (2) None has a claim on God's mercy.
  - (3) God's mercy on Israel arose out of his sovereign choice: 'I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy' (Exod 33:19).
  - (4) But it was not indiscriminate:
    - (a) At Sinai some were slain (Exod 32:27–28, 35); some were pardoned (Exod 33–34). Why?
    - (b) At Kadesh-Barnea (Num 14) a whole generation were sentenced to die in the desert. Only Joshua, Caleb, and those under twenty when they left Egypt were spared. Why?
    - (c) Later God repudiated the ten tribes of Israel and said 'They are not my people' (Hos 1:9), but spared Judah. Why?
- 
6. **Israel's restoration must be totally by God's grace and mercy** **9:23–33**
- a.* On the same terms as the Gentiles (9:24).
  - b.* Many Gentiles in Paul's day were justified by grace, through faith, and thus became vessels of mercy and glory (9:23, 30).
  - c.* But Paul's Jewish contemporaries mostly refused to become vessels of mercy and insisted on trying to earn salvation by works.
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## [The Argument of Romans 10](#)

### *The Reasons Why So Many of Paul's Fellow-Jews Were Not Saved*

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1.	It wasn't that Paul had not prayed for them: he had.	10:1
2.	It wasn't that they were irreligious: they had a zeal for God.	10:2
3.	It was that, being ignorant of the true function of the law, they would not submit to God's way of justifying sinners, but insisted on their own way.	10:3-5
4.	It was not that justification by faith is difficult to achieve. It is easy: the word is . . . in your mouth and heart.	10:6-11
5.	It was not that God has favourites: <i>whoever</i> calls shall be saved.	10:12-13
6.	For people to call on the name of the Lord, four conditions have to be met:	10:14-15
	<i>a.</i> They have to believe in him;	
	<i>b.</i> For that to happen, they have to hear him;	
	<i>c.</i> For that to happen, there has to be a preacher;	
	<i>d.</i> For that to happen, the preacher has to be sent.	
7.	It wasn't that these conditions were not fulfilled. The trouble was that they would not obey the gospel.	10:16
8.	It wasn't that they couldn't believe unless God first gave them the faith to believe with. Faith comes by hearing . . . the word of Christ.	10:16-17
9.	It wasn't that they were so dead in trespasses and sins that they couldn't hear the word of Christ. They did hear.	10:18
10.	It wasn't that Israel did not realize what was happening and what 'being saved' meant. Gentiles were getting saved in front of their very eyes, as the Old Testament had prophesied they would.	10:19-20
11.	It wasn't that God had not elected them, and so they could not be saved. All day long God stood with outstretched arms pleading with them to come. But they refused him, contradicted him, and rebelled against him.	10:21

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## **The Argument of Romans 11**

### *God's Strategies for the Eventual Salvation of All Israel*

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<b>1.</b>	<b>God has not cast off his people, has he? No!</b>	<b>11:1–6</b>
	Evidence:	
	a. In Elijah's day God left himself a remnant to maintain Israel's witness to the true God.	
	b. In the same way now there is a remnant of Israel, chosen by God on the ground that they are prepared to accept salvation by grace and not by their own works.	
	c. God's judicial hardening of the rest of Israel is in accord with Old Testament prophecies (Isa 29:1; Deut 29:4; Ps 69:22–23).	
<hr/>		
<b>2.</b>	<b>Israel have not stumbled and fallen so as never to rise again, have they? No!</b>	<b>11:7–12</b>
	a. In God's strategy, by Israel's fall, salvation has come to the Gentiles ON PURPOSE to provoke Israel to jealousy, and thus to repentance and restoration.	
	b. If their fall and loss has brought riches to the Gentiles, how much more shall their restoration bring!	
<hr/>		
<b>3.</b>	<b>Things that Gentile believers should remember</b>	<b>11:13–24</b>
	a. Paul glorifies his mission to the Gentiles, not because Gentiles are superior to Jews, but in an attempt to provoke unbelieving Jews to envy, and thus to salvation.	11:13–14
	b. For if the casting away of Israel has led to the reconciling of the world, their restoration will bring veritable life from the dead.	11:15
	c. The present remnant of Jewish believers is the firstfruits of the eventual conversion of <i>all Israel</i> . The firstfruits are holy: so will the full mass be.	11:16
	d. The patriarchs were the root, and they were holy. So are the branches (excepting, of course, those that had to be cut off).	11:16
	e. Gentile Christians have no ground for boasting that some natural branches were broken off and Gentiles grafted in, because:	
	(1) It is the patriarchal root that carries and nourishes the Gentile believers, and not the other way round.	11:17–18
	(2) Some Jewish branches were broken off because of unbelief: but the continuance of Gentile Christians in the olive tree is dependent on their continuing to believe.	11:19–22
	(3) If it has been possible to graft in wild branches (Gentile believers), it will certainly be possible for natural (Jewish branches), though now broken off, to be grafted back in again.	11:23–24

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<b>4.</b>	<b>The mystery of Israel's present temporary hardening, and future salvation</b>	<b>11:25–31</b>
<i>a.</i>	This temporary hardening will last only until 'the fullness of the Gentiles be come in' (cf. John 10:16).	11:25
<i>b.</i>	<i>All Israel</i> shall be saved at the coming of the deliverer.	11:26
<i>c.</i>	Israel will then enter into the good of the new covenant.	11:27
<i>d.</i>	At present Israel is hostile to the gospel and therefore to Christians; but they are to be loved for God's unchangeable electing grace that chose their forefathers.	11:28–29
<i>e.</i>	The fairness and balance of God's strategies:	11:30
	(1) Gentiles: in the past, disobedient to God.	
	(2) Yet now, through Israel's disobedience, they have received mercy.	
	So now Israelites:	11:31
	(1) They have now been guilty of the disobedience of unbelief.	
	(2) But by the mercy shown to you, they also (being provoked by envy) may obtain mercy.	
<b>5.</b>	<b>What God has to do to get Gentiles and Jews saved</b>	<b>11:32</b>
<i>a.</i>	No one can be brought to believe, in the full sense of that term, until they have been brought to realize that hitherto they have been unbelievers.	
<i>b.</i>	God has therefore shut up all to unbelief that he might have mercy on all.	
<i>c.</i>	It is hard enough for religious, but unsaved, Gentiles to realize and admit that they are guilty, sinners, and unbelievers. It is even harder for religious, but unsaved, Jews to realize, like Saul of Tarsus, that, in spite of their 'worship' of the one true God, they are, in the only sense that matters, unbelievers.	
<i>d.</i>	But God will wait until, under his disciplines, <i>all Israel</i> comes to that realization, repents, and is saved.	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Doxology to the wisdom and knowledge of God in devising ways of achieving the salvation of the maximum number of people</b>	<b>11:33–36</b>

## **Brief Synopsis of Romans Chapters 12–16**

### *The Yielded Body and the Renewed Mind*

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<b>Chapter 12</b>	1. Ethics: a response to God’s mercies. 2. Rejection of conformity to world: transformation in accordance with God’s will. 3. The believer: his gift and duties.
<b>Chapter 13</b>	4. The believer and the wrath of God: (a) Individually: avenge not yourselves. (b) Submit to state: the minister of wrath. 5. The believer and fulfilling the law. 6. Living in the light of the coming day.
<b>Chapter 14</b>	7. The weak and the strong: (a) The importance of the individual’s personal faith in direct accountability to the Lord.
<b>Chapter 15</b>	(b) The importance of unity between Gentile and Jew. 8. The God of endurance, of comfort, of hope and of peace.
<b>Chapter 16</b>	9. Greetings to individual believers. 10. THE FINAL VICTORY—the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. 11. FINAL DOXOLOGY . . . to the ONLY WISE GOD.

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## Comparison of Sections One and Four

	<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Section 4</b>
	<b>Romans 1:1–5:11</b>	<b>Romans 12:1–16:27</b>
<b>The Body</b>	Their bodies dishonoured (1:24).	Present your bodies (12:1).
<b>The Mind</b>	Depraved mind (1:28).	Transformed by the renewing of your mind (12:2).
<b>Motivation</b>	Neither gave thanks (1:21).	I exhort you by the mercies of God (12:1).
<b>Service</b>	Worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator (1:25).	A living sacrifice . . . acceptable to God . . . your spiritual service (12:1).
<b>God’s Wrath</b>	The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (1:18). We shall be saved from the wrath (5:9).	A minister of God, an avenger for wrath . . . therefore . . . submit . . . not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience’ sake (13:4–5).
<b>Faith</b>	Abraham . . . was strengthened in his faith (4:20).	Him that is weak in faith (14:1).
<b>God’s Judgment</b>	So that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world be accountable to God—liable to God’s punishment (3:19).	We shall all stand before God’s judgment seat . . . every tongue will confess to God . . . each of us will give an account of himself to God (14:10–12).
<b>Christ’s Death</b>	While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (5:8).	Christ died, and lived again, that he might be Lord (14:9).
<b>Jew–Gentile</b>	Abraham, father of believers . . . uncircumcised . . . and circumcised (4:11–12).	Christ a minister of the circumcision . . . and that the Gentiles might glorify God (15:8–9).

## Comparison of Sections Three and Four

<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Section 4</b>
<b>Romans 9:1–11:36</b>	<b>Romans 12:1–16:27</b>
<b>Jew–Gentile relations</b>	<b>Jew–Gentile relations</b>
<p><b>Paul’s ministry:</b> inasmuch as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my office in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to jealousy and save some of them (11:13–14).</p>	<p><b>Paul’s ministry:</b> . . . that I should be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable . . . that my ministration for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints (15:16, 31).</p>
<p>. . . their loss, the riches of the Gentiles . . . you became partaker with them of the root of the fatness of the olive tree . . . glory not over the branches . . . (11:12, 17–18).</p>	<p>. . . and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister to them in material things . . . (15:27).</p>
<p>. . . not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles . . . I will call that my people which was not my people (9:24–25).</p>	<p>. . . Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people (15:8–13).</p>



## Exodus: The Nine Plagues on Egypt

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<b>Plague 1: Water to blood</b> In the morning . . . (7:15) Magicians did the same (7:22) <i>Pharaoh's heart was hardened (7:22)</i>	<b>Plague 4: Flies</b> Early in the morning . . . (8:20)  <i>Pharaoh hardened his heart (8:32)</i>	<b>Plague 7: Hail</b> Early in the morning . . . (9:13)  'But for this cause I have made you to stand, for to show you my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth' (9:16).
<b>Plague 2: Frogs (8:1–2)</b> Magicians did the same (8:7) <i>Pharaoh hardened his heart (8:15)</i>	<b>Plague 5: Murrain (9:1–3)</b>  <i>The heart of Pharaoh was stubborn (9:7)</i>	<b>Plague 8: Locusts (10:1–4)</b>
<b>Plague 3: Lice (8:16)</b> Magicians could not (8:18) Magicians: 'this is the finger of GOD' <i>Pharaoh's heart was hardened (8:19)</i>	<b>Plague 6: Boils (9:8–9)</b> Magicians could not stand (9:11)  THE LORD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART (9:12)	<b>Plague 9: Darkness (10:21)</b>

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## About the Author

**DAVID W. GOODING** is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Greek at Queen's University, Belfast and a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He has taught the Bible internationally and lectured on both its authenticity and its relevance to philosophy, world religions and daily life. He has published scholarly articles on the Septuagint and Old Testament narratives, as well as expositions of Luke, John, Acts, Hebrews, the New Testament's use of the Old Testament, and several books addressing arguments against the Bible and the Christian faith. His analysis of the Bible and our world continues to shape the thinking of scholars, teachers and students alike.