

With Pastor Paul Van Noy

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 1:1-17 (NKJV)

Lesson 1

1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. 5 Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ;

7 To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. 9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, 10 making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. 11 For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established—12 that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

13 Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. 14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. 15 So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" (Romans 1:1-17

Romans 1:1–7 Paul's Salutations

Verses 1–17 of chapter one are an introduction to the book and can be separated into three divisions: Paul's introduction of himself and greeting to the church (1–7); Paul's desire to come for a visit (8–15); and the main theme of Paul's letter (16–17).

Read Romans 1:1–17.

1. From your initial reading of the passage, what are your first impressions?

1. What can you determine about Paul's calling?
2. What does Paul know about the believers in Rome?
3. What do you learn about the message Paul has been called to share?

Look Closer . . .

Paul declares himself to be a *bondservant* of Christ. In other words, his life was no longer his own. Take a closer look at a few of Paul's writings that give you greater insight into how Paul viewed his position.

- *His personal perspective* – 1 Corinthians 6:20; Galatians 2:20
- *His ministry perspective* – 1 Corinthians 9:19–23; 2 Corinthians 4:5

The apostle writes as one who is passionate about his role in proclaiming the amazing Good News of salvation.

2. Who does Paul say first proclaimed this news? vv. 2–4

A. Who is prophesied as the essence of “the Good News of God?”

B. In His humanity, through whose family line did Jesus descend?

(For a better understanding of this Old Testament prophecy, read God's promise given to David through the prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:12–14a.) Jesus has always been God's Son; however, following His death and resurrection, He was shown to be the “Son of God with power” according to the Holy Spirit (v. 4).

Memory Verse:

“This Good News tells us how God makes us right in His sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, ‘It is through faith that a righteous person has life.’” Romans 1:17 NLT

Word Wealth:

Write a definition for the words below.

bondservant (1:1)

apostle (1:1)

gospel (1:1, 9, 16)

saints (1:7)

Romans 1:8–15 Paul's Desire to Visit Rome

Paul continues his letter by expressing his thanks for the Roman believers and stating his desire to come in person for a visit. Paul's writing reflects his appreciation for what God has done and his realization that the call of God is accompanied by a great responsibility.

Read Romans 1:8–15.

1. What do you learn about the frequency of Paul's prayers for the believers in Rome? What does this reveal about Paul's heart? v. 9

a. What condition must be met if he is to come? v. 10

b. These Christians were not attempting to hide their faith. In fact, how far had word of this news spread? v. 8

Paul's humility is expressed in his eagerness to receive as well as to give; to be himself encouraged as well as to encourage others. He longs to go to Rome to reap the same kind of spiritual fruit he has harvested among Gentiles in other areas (v. 13).

As if to further clarify his zeal to preach in Rome, Paul summarizes in verses 14–15 his motive to preach to all men—Greeks and barbarians; wise and unwise—as based upon his sense of profound indebtedness to Jesus Christ. Simply put, Paul never got over the price God was willing to pay for his sins!

Have you taken time lately to reflect on the price God was willing to pay for *your* sins?

Romans 1:16–17 Not Ashamed of the Gospel

Verses 16–17 are a summary of Paul's letter to the Romans and contain the reason he feels passionate about the Good News.

For study purposes these verses are broken into stanzas in order to examine them more closely.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ . . .”

The gospel message is the revelation to mankind of how to be made right with God—by putting faith in Jesus Christ. Many in the world are offended by the claim that salvation is found in Christ alone. To find out what the Bible has to say, look up the following references.

John 14:6

Romans 10:9

Acts 4:12

1 John 5:11–12

“For it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”

Paul alludes to the fact that the Jews had a prior claim as God’s chosen people; but considering Paul’s own calling to preach to the Gentile world, he stresses the universal nature of the Good News—that it is for everyone!

Whenever we are ashamed of the gospel it is because we do not fully understand the awesome power contained in God’s message. Christians are nothing more than the mouthpiece—the vessel through which God Himself works to unleash His power to save. It is not the vessel that is important; in fact, God often chooses the weakest vessel to reveal His power.

1 Corinthians 1:18–25

1 Corinthians 2:1–5

2 Corinthians 4:7

2 Corinthians 12:8–9

“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”

The revelation of God’s righteousness can only be experienced by faith—from first to last. It involves humbling oneself at the feet of Christ and trusting Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself!

The Bible says that all our righteousness is as filthy rags; hence, there are no conditions we could ever meet to satisfy a holy God. We are cast upon Christ and His sacrificial death for our sins to save us.

When we put our faith in Christ, God accepts us because of His righteousness.

Reflect on Romans 3:21–26

Brief Recap:

What lesson in this study became real to you this week?

How do you intend to apply this lesson to your daily life?

Prayer Request:

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 1:18–32 (NKJV)

Lesson 2

God's Wrath on Unrighteousness

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 1:18–23 God's Wrath is Revealed

Paul has introduced the theme of Romans to his readers: God acts through the preaching of the gospel to put people into a right relationship with Him. Anyone—Jew or Gentile—can be saved by putting their faith in Christ.

Paul has more to share about this Good News but, before he does, he will elaborate at length for several chapters on the “bad news,” knowing that the answer to man's dilemma will not fully be appreciated until the problem is first understood. He begins first with the Gentiles.

Read Romans 1:18–32.

At the basis of man's problem is the truth that everyone apart from God's grace stands justly condemned under a death sentence for sin. Convincing people of their lost condition is the work of God and is a prerequisite for helping them to realize their need for a Savior.

1. What is the response of a holy God against wickedness and evil? v. 18

2. According to the following verses, why is God so angry about sin? ▪ v.18

▪ v.19

▪ v. 20

▪ v. 21

Man's attempts to *suppress the truth in unrighteousness* can be traced all the way back to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden who, when confronted with their sin, attempted to deny and excuse it before a holy God. That same predisposition to cover up and excuse away is still very much in evidence today. Nothing except the power of God working through the gospel is capable of making a difference!

For Group Discussion . . .

❖ Looking from your perspective, share an example of how God's truth is being suppressed in today's world.

Look Closer

Left up to human beings, the truth would continually be suppressed; but God reveals His truth to some—like Paul—setting them apart to send them out in the power of the Holy Spirit to preach to others. How does Paul express this in 1 Corinthians 2:4–5, and Titus 1:1–3?

3.

4.

Personalize this: Not all are called as evangelists or preachers; but every believer is called to share their faith with those around them. If you're a Christian, you have a unique testimony. How are *you* letting God use you to share His Good News to impact your world?

How has God plainly revealed himself to all people in the world? v. 20

1. Is anyone excused from knowing about Him? v. 20

2. How does Psalm 19:1–4 add to your understanding?

What keeps people from recognizing who God is? v. 21

a. Thinking they were wise, what did they actually become? v. 22

Memory Verse:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.” Romans 1:18–19

Romans 1:24–27 Exchanging the Truth for a Lie

Human beings are created—compelled by our very nature—to worship someone or something we attribute as greater than ourselves. But whenever the truth is suppressed and the fool says in his or her heart, “There is no God,” their heart becomes increasingly hardened over time. Then their worship will take some form of idolatry and often that downward spiral will manifest itself in immorality. The response of a holy God will be wrath, whether at present or sometime in the future on the Day of Judgment.

Read Romans 1:18–27.

1. What did God give these people over to, according to verse 24?

God let them go to follow their own desires, resulting in the misuse of their bodies, meaning that they engaged in perverted sexual acts with one another. Turning from God, they turned to *homosexuality*, and their own desires became the standard for their behavior.

2. What, specifically, did they turn *away from* and *turn toward*? ■ v. 25

■ v. 26

■ v. 27

3. What else does the Bible have to say about the sin of homosexuality?

1. Leviticus 18:22

2. Leviticus 20:13

3. 1 Corinthians 6:9–10

4. 1 Timothy 1:8–11

4. What happens to those who don't apply their knowledge of God? v. 28

If you prefer to think that God would not give people over to sin, the Bible has much to say on the matter. Grace can be misconstrued to mean to some that God doesn't care about sin, but that isn't what we read in Scripture. He is, rather, longsuffering and patient, but there will come a day when He is willing to give people over to their own desires and choices because they belligerently persist in making them.

Selah . . . (Pause and consider.)

Look up Proverbs 1:20–31, taking some time to carefully read it through. Try to think about what God would have *you* to know and understand personally from this passage. Is He saying something to your heart? Please share your thoughts . . .

❖ *My Impressions:*

❖ *My Instructions:*

The *wrath of God* is His anger expressed in the form of judgment, which can come immediately or at some later time, but not without the conviction of the Holy Spirit to check and recheck. When people do not respond or heed His repeated warnings, then it is God's "letting go" that results in consequences that can speak louder at times than words do.

Romans 1:28–32 The Downward Spiral Into Sin Read Romans 1:18–32.

People in society institute civil laws but they do not set the standard for God's laws; only God's Word can do that. Paul is writing about people who sat in judgment about God; they decided whether or not He fit into their standards. When He did not, they turned away from Him and rejected Him. Three times in our text Paul uses the words, "*God gave them over.*" Notice the truth and consequence laid out in the list below.

Truth

They knew the truth about God but they suppressed it (v. 18).

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped the creature instead of the Creator (v. 25).

They had the knowledge about God but they didn't want to apply it (v. 28).

Consequence

God gave them over to unclean lusts to dishonor their bodies (v. 24).

God gave them over to shameful lusts and vile passions (v. 26).

God gave them over to a debased mind , to do things *that ought not to be done* (v. 28).

Do you see the progression? Few would deliberately make the decision to walk down the path into depravity; rather there is a gradual digression or deviation from what is right into what is wrong.

Over time the boundaries between right and wrong can become blurred, making it easier to turn away from God.

The remainder of your study will be an exercise that you will either find enlightening or disturbing—or perhaps a little of both! As you research the *Word Wealth* and write a brief description, you will see the graphic depiction of the pathway to evil.

Look Closer . . .

In verse 29, Paul clearly states the people he is writing about are *filled to overflowing* with each of the traits listed. His point is that unchecked sin not only hardens the heart, it leads people further into more sin.

❖ How is the seriousness of Paul's point emphasized in verse 32?

The Book of Romans is full of hope, which we will see as we take a closer look in the weeks ahead. For now, as you close your study, spend a little time in the verses below. Let them minister to you about the hope for anyone who turns away from a life of sin and turns to God.

▪ Romans 6:15–23

▪ Isaiah 55:6–7

❖ Personal: Which passage is a comfort to you today-why?

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 2:1–29 (NKJV)

Lesson 3

Romans 2:1–29 (NKJV)

God's Righteous Judgment - The Jews Guilty as the Gentiles

2 *"Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.*

² *But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.*

³ *And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵ But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ⁶ who "will render to each one according to his deeds": ⁷ eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; ⁸ but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, ⁹ tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; ¹⁰ but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God.*

¹² *For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law ¹³ (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; ¹⁴ for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) ¹⁶ in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*

¹⁷ *Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, ¹⁸ and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, ¹⁹ and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. ²¹ You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? ²² You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? ²⁴ For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.*

²⁵ *For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶ Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? ²⁷ And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."*

Paul gently moves his conversation from the Roman believers and begins a focus toward the Jews in Rome who were judgmental of the Gentile sinners. These Jews were practicing the same sins they were condemning the Gentiles for doing, yet they themselves believed they were free to do so because they were the covenant people of God. These Jews were not yet saved because they had not yet trusted Jesus as Messiah.

Paul tells these Jews who were practicing sin that they are guilty before God. Therefore, the Jews he addresses are in need of the Gospel just as the Gentiles whom they condemned.

- 1) For what sin are the Jews without excuse according to Paul? v. 1
- 2) Human judgment is based upon self-perception and personal values; upon what is God's judgment based? v. 2
- 3) Would the unsaved Jews – even as God's chosen people – be capable of avoiding the judgment that the unsaved Gentiles would receive?
- 4) According to Paul the law pointed out the sins of these Jewish people. Does the law point out the sins of Gentiles too?
- 5) Can anyone be made righteous by keeping the law?
- 6) True or False: According to Paul, God shows no partiality to one group of people over another. In other words, the Jews and the Gentiles both need a Savior and must trust Jesus as Messiah.
- 7) According to Chapter 1 and now in Chapter 2 Paul says that all men whether Jew or Gentile have a conscience. Even the Gentiles who did not have the law. Does Paul therefore suggest that the Gentiles will escape judgment because they did not have the law?
- 8) Paul told these Jewish men that they were not really Jews even if they were circumcised because their hearts were not true to God and they did not trust Him for Salvation. In the same way, is it possible for some who go to church and even say they are Christian to error in genuine saving faith?
- 9) True or False: Even as the Jews were addressed by Paul in verses 21-22 we could suggest that the same rule applies to those who are genuinely saved.
- 10) In verse 24 Paul said that the Gentiles blasphemed the Lord because of the behavior of the Jews. Is it possible for a believer to live in such a way as to cause the same kind of blasphemy?

Selah...

God wants *us* to view others according to their worth in His eyes. In showing no partiality, God demonstrates how to extend grace instead of judgment.

Consider how God has extended His grace toward you.

Can you think of someone you have been judgmental toward but who could benefit from your grace?

How can you extend grace to that person this week?

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 3:1–20 (NKJV)

Lesson 4

Romans 3:1-20 (NKJV)

God's Judgment Defended

3 What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? 2 Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. 3 For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? 4 Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged." 5 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) 6 Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world? 7 For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? 8 And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come"—as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.

All Have Sinned

9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. 10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." 13 "Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 destruction and misery are in their ways; 17 and the way of peace they have not known." 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

The Jewish people were privileged. God specifically chose them in order to make Himself known to them and through them to the rest of the world. God gave the Jews the Law as a standard of righteousness and as the schoolmaster designed to bring about conviction for sin and show them their need for a savior.

Those who knew God and refused to surrender to Him were guilty of rebellion and justly punished. The same is true today. All men are guilty of sin and deserve death. Therefore, God is just to condemn men and is righteous when He inflicts wrath.

The good news is that God has made provision for all men in Jesus Christ and provided us with a living hope in Him.

Read: Galatians 1:1 – 5:15 for further contextualization.

True or False: The Jews were a specially chosen people because they had certain characteristics that God was particularly fond of.

True or False: God sovereignly chose the Jews. If He had so desired He could have used any people group to make Himself known.

True or False: Having been chosen of God and having the law given to the Jewish people was a special privilege they uniquely possessed.

True or False: The Old Covenant Law was given to the Gentiles and to the Jews.

What was the sign of the Old Covenant?

- a. Sabbath Day Worship
- b. Circumcision
- c. The Rainbow

In verses 7 and 8 Paul mentions the slanderous reports that were circulating about him. These comments really personalize Paul's letters and allow us to see the humanness of the apostle(s).

True or False: If I proclaim the Gospel, it is possible that slanderous reports will be made of me.

True or False: There is a day of judgment coming upon the Christ rejecting world.

True or False: There is judgment coming for those who persecute believers.

True or False: God has not appointed the believer to wrath. Therefore, we proclaim the Gospel so all men – who are worthy of death and judgment may escape the wrath to come.

Paul cites from a number of Old Testament passages showing that the Jews are guilty of sin and rebellion against God. These passages are used to show their sin and guilt. His purpose here is to show them that they are no better than the Gentiles and are in need of a savior just like they are. The law pointed this out on its own and was the method God used to bring the knowledge of sin. He reminds these Jews that *"by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

Even though the Law was given only to the Jews, this revelation of God and His holy standard shows the whole world (through the nation and people of Israel) that all of us are guilty of sin.

True or False: There is a move toward removing the presence of the Ten Commandments from public places in America today.

True or False: The desire to move the Ten Commandments from public view is a way people are "suppressing the truth" and removing God from their conscience.

True or False: The desire to "get rid of God" is futility. God is true and every man is a liar.

Selah

Consider your own sinful condition without Christ.

Consider how blessed you are to know the truth and to believe the Gospel.

Think about others you know for whom you can pray who need Jesus just like you.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 3:21–31 (NKJV)

Lesson 5

Romans 3:21-31 (NKJV)

God's Righteousness Through Faith

²¹ But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Boasting Excluded

²⁷ Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. ²⁹ Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, ³⁰ since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Paul argues throughout His epistles that justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. His letter to the Romans is no exception. However, it is clear that he sees the value of the Law.

In the previous lesson we learned that the Law was not given to the Gentiles but was specific to the Jews. However, through the Jews God made Himself known to the world. This is also true of the Law.

The Law has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ; could never make man righteous (Galatians 2:21), made nothing perfect (Hebrews 7:18-19), was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:11-14), has been made obsolete (Hebrews 8:1 – 9:5), and is abolished (Ephesians 2:15). However, Paul says that the Law should be established.

The Law points out that there is only one God; that He is holy, is to be honored, that righteous standards may be known, and that they are absolute. People, by nature, are law breakers. Therefore, the Law highlights the shortcomings of man and his need for a savior. Furthermore, and in particular, the Sabbath points out that there is no “rest” but in the Lord. Therefore, Paul states that the Law has purpose and value, should be “established”, and is a standing landmark.

Read: All the verses above in order as cited in the text.

The Read: Ephesians 1:1 – 3:21

True or False: All men and women are sinners.

True or False: “Propitiation” is defined as that which satisfies the wrath of God and is the means by which sins are forgiven.

True or False: Jesus is not the only propitiation for sins.

True or False: The blood of bull and goats – i.e. any or all of the sacrifices required in the Law could never take away sins. (See Hebrews 10:4)

True or False: During the Old Covenant dispensation the sins of the people were not taken away.

True or False: All men and women need a savior – but there are exceptions.

True or False: The righteousness of God is imputed to man apart from the law, by grace alone, by and through faith alone, in Christ alone.

True or False: People can still boast in their works because God really only makes up the difference for our shortcomings.

True or False: There is only one God.

Choose the correct statement(s)

- a. Jesus is God
- b. The Father is God
- c. The Holy Spirit is an invisible force but not God – it is the power of God.

True or False: The Jews who trust Jesus for salvation are saved *by* faith because they believe in their promised Messiah.

True or False: The Gentiles who trust Jesus for salvation are saved *through* faith because they are granted access to God *by* faith in the promised Messiah.

True or False: Jesus is the God of the Gentiles and the Father is the God of the Jews.

Selah

Consider your level of thankfulness related to the fact that you are continuously falling short of the glory of God but that the righteousness of God is imputed to you by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Spend some time this week giving thanks to God for His indescribable gift.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 4:1–8 (NKJV)

Lesson 6

Romans 4:1–8 (NKJV)

Abraham Justified by Faith

4 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? ²For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” ⁴Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

David Celebrates the Same Truth

⁵But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, ⁶just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ⁷“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered;” ⁸Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.”

Last week we learned that God justifies the sinner by grace alone, through and by faith alone, in Christ alone. We discussed the fact that salvation is all of God and that man offers nothing meritorious toward his salvation. Some have contended that God “makes up the difference” for those who try really hard to serve Him. This couldn’t be further from the truth. The Bible clearly states, *“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”* (Isaiah 64:6)

True or False: Those who embrace a performance driven Gospel are often prone to arrogance about their Christian expression and are likely to be critical of other believers who they think are not performing at the level they are.

True or False: It is good to know that Abraham was justified by faith because he was a man and the Bible records his shortcomings.

True or False: Paul’s teaching shows that those who are performance driven in relation to the Gospel have failed to see the greatness of the cross.

True or False: “Jesus paid it all” is the title and lyrics of a song but the Bible does not teach this.

Last week we learned that the blood of bull and goats – i.e. any or all of the sacrifices required in the Law could never take away sins. Therefore Paul’s quote from the Old Testament which says that the *“sins are covered”* was appropriate to the Old Covenant dispensation. However, we now understand that God not only forgives our sin but takes away our sin. In the Gospel of John we read, *“The next day John [the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’”* (John 1:29)

True or False: During the Old Covenant dispensation the sins of the people were not taken away. 1

Read: Psalm 32

In reading Psalm 32 we learn that believing the bad news about our sinfulness – *“I acknowledged my sin to you”* – is as much an act of faith as believing the good news – *“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”* When we agree with God about what He calls sin we are believing His word and trusting in Him. God has declared all men sinners and the Law has been used to bring conviction for sin. As we come to know our sinful nature and that we are all violators of God’s holy standard, we realize our need for a savior.

We are aware of King David’s sin of adultery and murder. He was aware of it too. However, it was not until Nathan the Prophet came to him and exposed what King David was hiding that he came to genuine repentance. When David sought forgiveness he received it.

Read: Psalm 51

Note: When David said *“take not your Holy Spirit from me”* he was living in the Old Covenant dispensation. Were he to be living on earth today – in the Church Age – he would not say this. In the Church Age there is a unique blessing that God has given the believer: that He will never take His Holy Spirit from us. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. In Ephesians 1 we read, *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”* (Ephesians 1:13–14)

In the Gospel of John we read, *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.”* John 10:27–30 (NKJV) Those who have been given eternal life will never perish! Praise the Lord! He will never leave us, never forsake us, and will be with us always!

Impute: An accounting term: to credit to ones account.

Paul uses David as a reflective example of imputed righteousness and forgiveness of sin. In fact, he uses the same Greek word translated *“accounted”* in verse 5 and *“impute”* in verses 6 and 7.

True or False: God *“imputes”* righteousness to believers and at the same time no longer *“imputes”* sin to them.

True or False: King David deserved to die and spend eternity in Hell.

True or False: God was gracious to King David and forgave his sin.

True or False: I have recognized my own sin and have asked God for forgiveness.

True or False: I am forgiven forever and am sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 4:9–25 (NKJV)

Lesson 7

Romans 4:9–25 (NKJV)

Abraham Justified Before Circumcision

⁹ Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. ¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, ¹² and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

The Promise Granted Through Faith

¹³ For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, ¹⁵ because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶ Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all ¹⁷ (as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; ¹⁸ who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, “So shall your descendants be.” ¹⁹ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰ He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. ²² And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, ²⁴ but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵ who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

Read: Genesis 15-17

Having read Genesis 15-17 we can see that God called Abraham and then later had him implement the “sign of the covenant” known as circumcision.

God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendents Isaac and Jacob was special for Abraham and his family. However, it was not at the exclusion of other nations and people. God chose Israel in order to make Himself known to them and through them to the rest of the world.

True or False: God desire a relationship with all men.

True or False: God has always justified men by faith – even before the cross.

True or False: Abraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised.

True or False: God commanded Abraham to circumcise all the male children as a sign of the covenant.

True or False: If a man is circumcised he is saved.

True or False: If a man trusts God for salvation and has not been circumcised he can be saved anyway.

True or False: The law was given to the world so that men and women can learn how to be good.

True or False: If I was a good person I would be saved.

True or False: Justification is simply defined as “Just if I’d never sinned.”

True or False: Because Gentiles can be justified by faith, God no longer has a plan for Israel as a nation.

True or False: A day coming when “all” the land of Israel will be occupied by the people of “the” faith.

True or False: Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old when Isaac was born.

Note on Justification

- (1) Justification is a gift - it cannot be merited or earned. It is “*not of works*” (vs. 1–8).
- (2) Justification came before circumcision (human activity). (vs. 9–12).
- (3) Justification is not provided through the law as the law came 430 years later. (vs. 13–17).
- (4) Justification is by faith alone, through grace alone. (vs. 18–25).

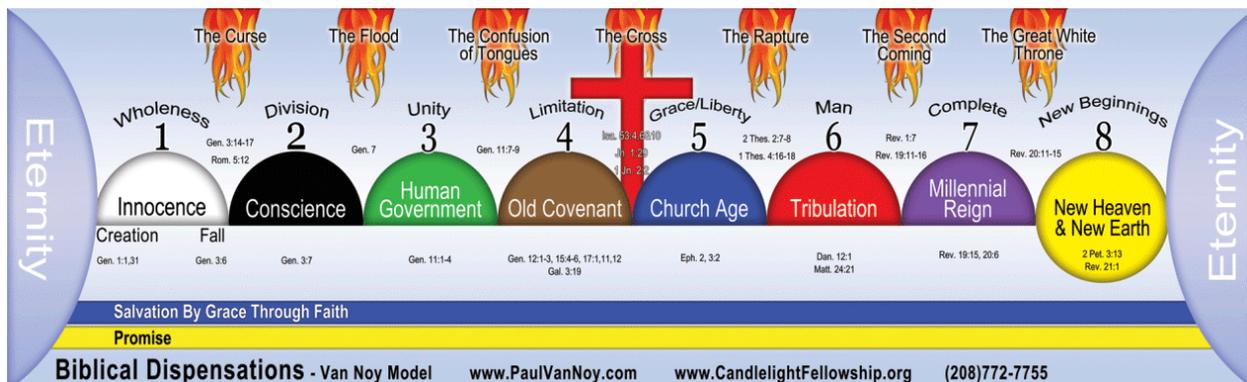
Read: Galatians 3

True or False: The promise of justification by faith was only applicable from the time of the call of Abraham until the Law was given.

Read: Genesis 3:14-15

True or False: The promise of redemption began in the garden.

True or False: Salvation has always been by grace through faith alone. However, since the time of Christ’s ministry here on the earth it is “by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.”



Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 5:1-11 (NKJV)

Lesson 8

Romans 5:1–11 (NKJV)

¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁴and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

⁶For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Read: Psalm 25

Paul begins chapter five with the word “Therefore.” This reference point calls us to reflect on the previous 4 chapters of Romans.

It is clear that the peace Paul refers to here in chapter 5 is not a circumstantial peace or even a peace within “ourselves” based on behavior or good works. It is a peace “with God” – interpersonally. It relates to our salvation and the relationship we have been provided “in Christ” which predates our personal capabilities or human will. This is why Paul stresses that “*when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*” Herein he states that we were without capability, or capacity. Therefore we understand that the peace referred to is unification with God - removal of all that divides. This is referred to in Scripture as Atonement (At-one-ment). We are at one with the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Word Wise (A layman’s view)

Atonement: At-one-ment / made one / without division

Justification: Just if I’d never sinned /

Reconciled: No balance due / the books balance

True or False: We *have* peace with God because we understand that our peace is given by grace through faith through our Lord Jesus Christ.

True or False: The peace we have in Christ is not contingent on our works.

True or False: Believers who do not experience the peace we have in Jesus is usually the result of some form of false doctrine.

True or False: The peace we have in Jesus is a peace that relates to our present circumstances.

True or False: We can stand firm and rejoice in the Lord because we have peace with God.

True or False: We have access to the grace of God by taking communion.

True or False: We have access to the grace of God by faith alone in Christ alone.

True or False: If I hope in the Lord it is like gambling – I can hope for the best!

Read: James 1:1-25

True or False: When we go through trials we have hope because we know that there is a future glory the believer in Christ will fully experience.

True or False: Trials in my life will help bring me to maturity.

True or False: Trials in my life will help teach me patience.

True or False: I am a patient person and therefore won't have trials in my life.

Scriptural Notes:

2 Corinthians 5:5 (NKJV) "Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee."

Ephesians 1:13–14 (NKJV) "In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

True or False: The love of God has been poured out in and into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

True or False: The Love of God poured out in and into our hearts by the Holy Spirit enables us to love God.

True or False: The love of God poured out in and into our hearts by the Holy Spirit enables us to love others.

True or False: I have to be able to "love myself" before I can love God or others.

True or False: The Bible assumes correctly that I love myself – and most of the time I love my "self" more than I should.

True or False: Believers will never suffer the wrath of God.

True or False: We are all ungodly sinners for whom Christ died and saved from the wrath we all deserve.

True or False: I am a thankful worshipper and I desire to represent my Lord and His Gospel – it really is Good News.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 5:12-21 (NKJV)

Lesson 9

Romans 5:12–21 (NKJV)

¹²Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—¹³(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. ¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. ¹⁶And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. ¹⁷For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) ¹⁸Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

²⁰Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, ²¹so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This lesson contains one of the many disputed passages in the Bible. Within this passage we have teaching on the origin of sin, the nature of man, the consequences of the fall, and the breadth of Christ's salvific work. Many false teachings have been developed herein therefore we will carefully look at the passage.

When God created man He made him without sin. Sin came into the world as the result of disobedience. Through the rule of Federal Headship sin was passed down through Adam to all men and women – thus all men are sinners; and by nature through Natural Headship men and women are born in a sinful and fallen condition. However, sin is not exclusive to the rule of Federal Headship. Paul makes clear that all men and women personally sin and are prone to sinfulness through Natural Headship. He said, *“death spread to all men, because all sinned.”* (vs. 12) Therefore we understand that man has a sinful and fallen nature through both Federal and Natural Headship and is personally responsible for their own sin *“because all sin”* as was also earlier stated in Romans 3 when Paul said that *“all have sinned.”* (3:23)

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of the whole world made possible the justification God promises those who believe. The fact that Paul uses the word *“many”* (vs's 15 and 19) has caused confusion. When Paul said, *“By one man's offense many died”* (vs 15) he was referring only to man – not Lucifer or the angels. If he had used the expression *“By one man's offense [all] died”* it could be suggested that *“all”* is all and therefore Lucifer and/or the angels would or could be held guilty for the sin of Adam. This is untrue. Satan and his angels are responsible for their own sin.

Some contend that *“many”* suggests that only some men are sinners – only those who personally sin; suggesting that some have not sinned. For example: an infant... This too is a false doctrine. Paul does support the doctrine of man's sinful nature and teaches that men sin because they are sinners.

On the other hand, Paul says that *“the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.”* This identifies three things. 1) The error of Universalism. 2) The fact that Jesus’ salvific work does not apply to Lucifer or the angels. 3) That man must trust Christ to be named as the justified.

The fact that *“until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law”* (vs 13) does not suggest that men in rebellion and unbelief were exempt from the Rule of Federal Headship. Those who died in unbelief toward the Lord were guilty of sin and therefore rightly suffered the consequences. An example is the population during the times of Noah. This is why Paul said *“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam.”* (vs 15) The law was introduced that sin might be identified as such and was therefore condemnatorily validating the imputation of sin toward all man.

Finally, Paul said that Adam (the first man) was *“a type of Him who was to come.”* (vs 15) Therefore, in the first Adam all die and in Christ (the last Adam) all may be made alive. *“And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”* (1 Cor. 15:45) Praise the Lord that *“where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (vs’s 20b-21)

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

Word Wise

Impute: Taken into account / charged against or credited to

Transgress: To step out of line / to cross a border /

Soteriology: The study of salvation

Salvific: The effect of salvation

Federal Headship: The role of man in the family and how the sin nature is passed from generation to generation

Natural Headship: The fact that men inherit the nature of man physically

Universalism: The belief that all people will ultimately be saved

True or False: Sin entered into the world through the disobedience of Adam.

True or False: Death came into the world by Divine Worldwide Judgment and was the result of Adam’s sin. Therefore by nature I have inherited his fallen condition.

True or False: The law made men specifically aware of sin and transgression.

True or False: I am a sinner “by nature” *and* “because I have sinned.”

True or False: Lucifer and his angels willfully rebelled against the Lord and are worthy of eternal torment.

True or False: In the end, essentially all men will be saved because Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.

True or False: Only those who trust Christ for salvation will be saved.

True or False: The salvation offered all men is a free gift and the grace of God is greater than all my sin.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 6 (NKJV)

Lesson 10

Romans 6:1–23 (NKJV)

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? ³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. ¹⁰ For *the death* that He died, He died to sin once for all; but *the life* that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? ¹⁷ But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading* to more lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness.

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Over the years the message of grace has been misinterpreted by many. It has been seen as a message of licentiousness. Many avoid teaching grace because they believe it inspires men and women to misbehave. After all, they will say, “if ‘sin abounds’ and ‘grace abounds much more’ then why not just sin?” This question emerges from the natural end of grace being taught in its fullest form. When grace is taught correctly it does lead one to understand that our sin has been fully dealt with and no longer has the power to separate us from God. However, Paul the apostle, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, cuts off the tendency to abuse the grace given us. Paul correctly understands that the question will surface and therefore asks, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” and then answers, “Certainly not!”

The tension in the message should be clearly understood. Sin has been dealt with at Calvary and is no longer in power over the believer's life. However, sin hurts people (both the one sinning and others around) and should therefore be avoided altogether. Furthermore, a believer who intentionally abuses grace misrepresents the Lord and His power in the believer's life.

Paul points out that the believer has been symbolically baptized "into Jesus death" and therefore is dead to the old life and its ways. In like manner the believer is also "resurrected" into a new life by being identified with Christ in His resurrection; and therefore will live in Christ free from the power of sin and death. This we call "positional sanctification." Now as free from sin and death we are called to live free from the sinful behaviors associated with the old life. As we grow in obedience and surrender to the will of God in our lives we experience what is called "progressive sanctification."

Believers who genuinely love (agape') God and love (agape') others learn to live in a way that demonstrates maturity and surrender to the life of Christ – from within. Love becomes the filter by which we measure our personal behavior.

Read: Ephesians 4-6

Word Wise

Licentiousness: Behavior absent of moral restraint, unlicensed activity

Orthodoxy: Adherence to correct doctrine.

Orthopraxy: Adherence to correct living.

Agape': Others centered, self sacrificing love. A love that has the best interests of others in view.

Positional Sanctification: The believer's status, as imparted by God: his or her separation to Him from sin, death, and the world.

Progressive Sanctification: The process of maturing in our walk with the Lord, maturity.

True or False: Because of the grace of God I can sin anytime I want.

True or False: Sinning will not cost me my salvation.

True or False: Death had no dominion over Jesus and because I am in Him death has no dominion over me.

True or False: As a believer in Jesus I am called to present myself as an instrument of righteousness.

True or False: I am free from the power of sin because I no longer sin.

True or False: I am free from the power of sin because of the finished work of Christ.

True or False: As a believer, I will not sin any longer and will not fall short in my behavior.

True or False: Sin enslaved me when I was without Christ. I am now called a servant of God and am righteous in Him *positionally*. Therefore I intend to live righteously as my *practice*.

True or False: I have eternal life in spite of the fact that I still fall short of living perfectly.

True or False: Paul the apostle lived a perfect life and could therefore say all he said.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 7:1-12 (NKJV)

Lesson 11

Romans 7:1–12 (NKJV)

“Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? ² For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. ³ So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. ⁴ Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. ⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. ⁶ But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

⁷ What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.” ⁸ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. ⁹ I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. ¹⁰ And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. ¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. ¹² Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.”

Many misunderstandings have arisen from the *illustration* Paul gives here when using the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Therefore, we should note that this passage is not a Church Age teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage; it is an *illustration* concerning the place of the Law in the life of a believer. Had it been a teaching that applied to Church Age believers on marriage, etc., it would need explanation.

On marriage, divorce, and remarriage, Paul said that a believer is free to remarry if they have been abandoned and divorced by an unbelieving spouse.

1 Corinthians 7:12-15 says, “...*if any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him...But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace.*”

Herein Paul tells the believer that if an unbelieving spouse “*departs*,” the believer is free, i.e. “*not under bondage in such cases.*” This is the only Church Age allowance for divorce and remarriage. However, if Paul was teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage in Romans 7, he would be saying that there is no remarriage after divorce unless the “*departed*”, “*unbelieving*” spouse has died. This is clearly not the case in 1 Corinthians 7 and would be contradictory to his declaration of freedom for the believing spouse who has been left behind.

What Paul is teaching here is that the person who was once “under the Law” (i.e. married to the Law), but has since been identified in the death of Jesus Christ – and in His subsequent resurrection, is therefore alive in Christ and dead to the Law. This was discussed in our last lesson: Romans 6 Lesson 10. The believer who was once married to the Law has been freed from that “marriage” and has now been espoused to Christ.

The Law was an agency of death as instituted by God. Its purpose was to show men their sinfulness. Therefore Paul teaches that, “*when we were in the flesh,*” that is, unregenerated, “*the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. We see then that the Law condemned to death and proved guilty the “law breaker.”* However, those who have been regenerated by faith in Jesus Christ and have, therefore, “*passed from death unto life*”*, being identified in Jesus’ resurrection, can be said to “*have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*”

Paul then goes on to show that the Law, while it pointed out sin – and its sinfulness bringing about death, made the specifics of sin known, caused those sinful desires to become like “forbidden fruit”, and thus increased the desire for that which had been forbidden. Although this is the case, Paul is not suggesting that the Law was the cause of this propensity, but rather that man’s sinful nature is to blame.

Finally we see that Paul suggests there was a time in his life that he was “*alive without the law.*” This seems to refer to his *consciousness* of sin, or better said, the lack thereof. Therefore he lived in the state of being “*alive*” via ignorance of the law. However, he goes on to say that “*when the commandment came, sin revived and I died*” (i.e. became aware of his sinful condition). Therefore he concludes that “*the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good*” because it led him to see his need for a savior and therefore to Christ.

Paul is not suggesting that he was “spiritually alive” prior to knowing the Law. Paul was under condemnation before God and deserved the appropriate consequences. However, he was showing that he was without full consciousness of his sinful condition. Therefore, he says that the Law was holy, just, etc. but nonetheless condemning. He concludes that the Law, which he thought would bring him life, deceived him as such and condemned him to death.

Please also remember that in Lesson 5 based on chapter 3, we learned that the Law has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ, could never make man righteous (Galatians 2:21), made nothing perfect (Hebrews 7:18-19), was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:11-14), has been made obsolete (Hebrews 8:1 – 9:5), and is abolished (Ephesians 2:15). However, Paul said that the Law should be established. The reason for this is what Paul is communicating here in chapter 7.

Throughout the Scriptures we see that the Law points out that there is only one God, that He is holy, is to be honored, that righteous standards may be known, and that they are absolute. People, by nature, are law breakers. Therefore, the Law highlights the shortcomings of man and his need for the Savior. Furthermore, and in particular, the Sabbath points out that there is no “rest” but in the Lord. Therefore, Paul states that the Law has purpose and value, should be “established”, and is a standing landmark.

Read: *John 5:24
2 Corinthians 3:7-8
Galatians 2:20-21
Colossians 2:11-14
Ephesians 2
Hebrews 8:1-9:5

True or False: Believers have been crucified with Christ but have also been raised up with Him in His resurrection.

True or False: I was born a sinner, but I now know more about why; because the Law pointed out my shortcomings.

True or False: The Law has been crucified with Christ.

True or False: In the Church Age God has written His law into our hearts rather than on tablets of stone.

True or False: If I didn't know the Law I would not be a sinner.

True or False: The Law could not make a person righteous.

True or False: The Law has no value today because we are in the Church Age.

True or False: I am free from the condemnation of the Law and therefore free to live in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

True or False: The Law is like a landmark whereby a person can see that there is only one God; that He is holy and is to be honored.

True or False: Righteous standards may be known and are absolute.

True or False: People, by nature, are law breakers. Therefore, the Law highlights the shortcomings of man and his need for the Savior.

True or False: The Sabbath points out that there is no "rest" but in the Lord. Therefore the Sabbath is a picture of the rest we have in Jesus Christ.

True or False: The fruit of the Spirit is not something I work hard to produce; it is the fruit of the Spirit.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 7:13-25 (NKJV)

Lesson 12

Romans 7:13–25 (NKJV)

¹³ *Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.* ¹⁴ *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.* ¹⁵ *For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.* ¹⁶ *If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.* ¹⁷ *But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.* ¹⁸ *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.* ¹⁹ *For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.* ²⁰ *Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

²¹ *I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good.* ²² *For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.* ²³ *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.* ²⁴ *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* ²⁵ *I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

In verses 1-12 we learned that the Law pointed out sin and its consequences. However, Paul also said that the Law, a “ministry of death,” blessed him because it led him to see his need for a savior. Therefore Paul called the Law “...*holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.*” In verses 13-25 he will show that our sinful nature is something beyond our control and that the only relief is in our Savior: Jesus Christ.

For thousands of years, men and women have attempted to suppress the propensities of our fallen nature – to no avail. Odd as it may seem, this fact is really good news. God intended that we realize our inability to overcome sin so that we will learn to trust in Him rather than in ourselves. This is the revelation every believer will discover in the true Gospel: our insufficiency and the complete sufficiency of Christ.

All men and women are born spiritually dead in trespasses and in sin. We are separated from God and can do nothing in and of ourselves to remedy the problem. For this reason, Christ came to redeem us from sin and death. It is blind pride and self idolatry to think otherwise. This great discovery Paul communicates to the Romans.

Here in the second half of Romans 7, Paul shows us that as long as we are in this fleshly body we will have a propensity toward sin. He also shows us that we no longer live under the condemnation of that sin – nor are we to personally identify with it. We are a new creation in Christ and are called to identify with Him, His righteousness, and live surrendered to the Holy Spirit’s power at work in us. Believers who fail to understand this fall into the trap of a “Performance-Driven Gospel.”

Three errors are associated with a “Performance-Driven Gospel.” They are, front-loading, loading, and back-loading.

Front-loading the Gospel is any human performance designed to prepare one for salvation. For example: some are taught that they must stop sinning and *then* trust Christ. This is futility. Believers and unbelievers are prone to sin – and cannot stop sinning in order to be accepted in Jesus.

Other examples of front-loading could be the suggestion that one must be circumcised, baptized in water, take communion, or join a specific church, etc. in order to be saved. These or any other prerequisites to salvation are the makings of a false gospel. (See Galatians 1)

Loading the Gospel is the development of a performance-driven righteousness. Simply stated, it is “working” or “trying” to please God by making good choices, or refusing the impulses of the flesh, believing that our human effort pleases the Lord Who will therefore “make up the difference” for any shortfall. This they account as a partnership of sorts in the salvation process. This is no Gospel at all.

Back-loading the Gospel suggests that one must live “successfully” as a believer in order to maintain salvation. In other words, they must live righteously and consistently in order to remain saved. This is where most believers fail. They believe that if they sin they may lose their salvation; or if they sin and fail to confess each and every sin, they will remain unforgiven until they do so.

Please note: I am not suggesting that believers should carelessly practice sin or that they should refuse to confess their sin to God. However, the bondage of self-reliance and performance-driven righteousness is a losing battle. This is the point Paul is making.

Those who front-load, load, or back-load the gospel fail. They will either live in pride, based on their so-called successes, or live in defeat, based on their failures. Sooner or later God will work this out in His own. Whether it is in this life, or in eternity, God will see to it that every believer comes to see that the salvation He provides is not based on us. It is based solely on Christ. Every believer must come to the end of self and trust in the grace and mercy of God. It is only then that the believer will understand life, peace, truth, and the rest found in Jesus. Salvation is all of God – not of self. We simply surrender our lives to Christ, trusting all He said and all He has done. (See Ephesians 1)

None of Self

Oh, the bitter shame and sorrow
That a time could ever be
When I let the Savior's pity
Plead in vain, and proudly answered:
All of self and none of Thee!

Yet, He found me; I beheld Him
Bleeding on th' accursed tree,
Heard Him pray: Forgive them, Father;
And my wistful heart said faintly:
Some of self and some of Thee.

Day by day His tender mercy,
Healing, helping, full and free,
Sweet and strong and, ah! So patient,
Brought me lower, while I whispered:
Less of self and more of thee!

Higher than the highest heaven,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Lord, at last Thy love has conquered;
Grant me now Thy Spirit's longing:
None of self and all of Thee!

Finally, we should notice that Paul has been changed from within – he no longer wants to do wrong, but now desires to do what is right – even though he falls short. This is telling.

Unbelievers are more comfortable sinning than those who have been regenerated. This I call “The Blessed Misery.” There is a sense of grief believers feel when they sin. This is why Paul cries out saying, “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” (vs. 24) However, he then answers the cry with the hope he has in Jesus. “*I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*” (25a)

Understanding the Gospel has given Paul rest. Therefore, he thanks the Lord for the comfort provided in the truth: the rest provided in our Savior – our Sabbath.

Remember – Jesus is our Sabbath. The day was “*a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ*” Colossians 2:17 (NKJV). As believers we enter into the rest only Jesus can provide.

Paul concludes the chapter by saying, “*So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*” (vs. 25b) A careful reading will show that “*the law of God*” referred to is not the Law of the Old Covenant, but is the truth of the Gospel he knows now. The “*the law of sin*” he refers to is the resulting power of the Old Covenant Law which he said made him aware of his sin. “*I would not have known sin except through the law.*” (vs. 7) This “*law of sin*” is still at work in his human nature: the flesh, which he calls his “*members.*” (vs. 23) Therefore, with great rejoicing Paul exclaims “*I delight in the law of God according to the inward man*” even though he still suffered from “*the law of sin which is in his members.*”

Praise the Lord! We too can rejoice with Paul in the glorious truth of the Gospel – resting only in the finished work of Christ. We no longer identify ourselves in and with our sin, but now with and in the righteousness of God in Christ. “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)

Read: Galatians 1
Ephesians 1

Word Wise:

Front-loading the Gospel: Any human performance designed to prepare one for salvation.

Loading the Gospel: The development of a performance driven righteousness.

Back-loading the Gospel: The suggestion that one must live “successfully” as a believer in order to maintain salvation.

True or False: As a believer, I still fall short and still have a fleshly/sinful nature.

True or False: When I sin I feel a sense of grief and desire to do right.

True or False: I am able to stop sinning and live in sinless perfection.

True or False: Although Paul said he was the “chief of sinners,” he nonetheless identifies himself as the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

True or False: As a believer in Christ, even though I still fall short, I no longer identify myself with sin, but now identify myself with Christ and His righteousness.

True or False: Repentance is to have a change of mind – a change from my old thoughts and beliefs and to the renewed mind that is in agreement with God and His word.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 8:1-11 (NKJV)

Lesson 13

Romans 8:1–11 (NKJV)

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ¹⁰ And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

You are not in the flesh! This you must understand. Paul said, “You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit...” (vs. 9a), but then adds, “...if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.” (vs. 9b) The “if”, in this case, is a conditional conjunction. Therefore, it can be answered with a positive or negative. In other words, in the following clause, “if you are a believer in Christ”, the “if” would read “since”. Therefore, you, as a believer in Christ, “are not in the flesh but in the Spirit.” (vs. 9b)

As genuine believers in Jesus, we need not ask “if” the Spirit of God dwells in us – He does. This is how we who have trusted Christ for salvation are regenerated – by the indwelling Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives and makes us *spiritually* alive. We were born “in trespasses and sin” (Ephesians 2:1), but are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. God comes by His Spirit, changes us, and lives within us!

In John’s Gospel we read of Jesus saying, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:5–8 NKJV) We who were “born of water” [natural birth] are born by the Spirit of God: “born again.” This is a mystical (mysterious) part of our experience in Jesus and is unique to the Church Age.

Paul begins Romans 8 by saying, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” (vss. 1-2) He is essentially saying that those who are in Christ Jesus don’t “walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” and, therefore, do not live under “condemnation.” This is made extremely clear as we note the conjunction

“for” in verse 2. The word “for” could just as well read “because”. Therefore, Paul is saying, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, [because] the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*” (vss. 1-2) Furthermore, when we keep things in context and bridge to verse 9, we see that believers “*are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, [since] indeed the Spirit of God dwells in (us)*”. (vs. 9b) This is liberating truth. For the believer there is no condemnation. We are in Christ!

Secondly, we should note that the “*law of the Spirit of life in Christ*” is the Law Paul said he would serve with his “*mind*” in chapter 7. Remember that he said, “*So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*” (7:25b) A careful reading will show that “*the law of God*” referred to is not the Law of the Old Covenant, but is the truth of the Gospel he knows. The “*the law of sin*” he referred to was the power of the Old Covenant Law which he said made him aware of his sin. Remember that he said, “*I would not have known sin except through the law.*” (7:7)

When Paul says, “*So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God*”, (vs. 8) and that “*...the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be*” (vs. 7), he is showing that those who are unregenerated can do nothing that will merit God’s approval and acceptance. They must be born again; and until they are, they are living in the condemnation believers no longer endure.

Finally, Paul shows the unique nature of the Trinity. He names the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in these verses, showing the distinctive persons of the Godhead and their harmony in the work of salvation.

Through the Holy Spirit – “*the Spirit of God*” – we are born again and therefore have “*the Spirit of Christ.*”

When we have “*the Spirit of Christ*” within, our human spirits are made alive in Jesus and are therefore associated with His Spirit in righteousness (even though our bodies are still decaying and waiting to die). (vs. 10) We who are regenerated by the “*Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead*” – “*the Spirit of God*” – have the promise that a day will come when we will be physically resurrected in association with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. (vs. 11)

This we also learned in chapter 6 where we read, “*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Romans 6:3–11, NKJV)

We will see later in this chapter that Paul says “*...we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit...groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*” (Romans 8:23 NKJV)

Therefore, we can see that God works in the life of the believer by the power of His Holy Spirit to move us from death unto life in the work of regeneration, fill us with the Spirit of Christ, removing all condemnation, and promises us that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead will also raise us up to life everlasting. We as believers are blessed beyond what words can fully describe!

Read: Philippians 3

Word Wise:

Trinity: Theological term describing the unique and triune nature of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Godhead: Theological term describing the unique and triune nature of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in His all inclusive wholeness, undistinguished one from the other.

Triune: The complete unity of three coequal parts.

True or False: As a believer I can fall into sin and, therefore, come under the condemnation of God.

True or False: Because I have been Born Again, I am no longer “in the flesh” but am “in the Spirit.”

True or False: As a believer, I am not carnally minded. I have been made spiritually alive and know that there is more to life than this natural and temporal carnal world.

True or False: The unregenerated cannot please God.

True or False: The Law was weak because it could not make man righteous.

True or False: As a believer, I have the promise of a physical resurrection and everlasting life.

True or False: I am thankful for the fact that I do not live under condemnation.

True or False: As a believer, I give praise to the Lord for all He is and for all He has done.

Choose the correct answers:

Believers

- a. Cannot lose their salvation.
- b. Still sin and fall short, but should not live in disobedience to God.
- c. Are alive in the Spirit.
- d. Have the promise of a future physical resurrection and glorified body.
- e. Are in the flesh if they sin and fall short.
- f. Should live according to the Law, even though it is weak and cannot make man righteous.
- g. Have the Spirit of God dwelling within.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 8:12-17 (NKJV)

Lesson 14

Romans 8:12–17 (NKJV)

¹² Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Paul wants believers to know that they are no longer “debtors” to the flesh. We are free!

Before being regenerated we were “slaves of sin” (Romans 6) having “no hope and without God in this world.” (Ephesians 2:12) Now we are free from the power of sin and are therefore free to serve the Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.

A genuinely born again believer has been given the free gift of eternal life, has been justified, and sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The salvation every believer has received is not of works and is not maintained by works.

Therefore, Paul tells the believers that they are no longer in a “debtor” relationship to sin, death, or fear; but are now “slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6), and called to live accordingly. We are God’s children – destined for eternity – adopted as children – with an inheritance – and are called to act like it – even though we do and will fall short.

“Falling short” of sinless living will not result in the loss of the believer’s position as an “adopted child of God.” This is what Paul made clear in Romans 7. This we must know! If we fail to understand this fact we will live in the “fear” Paul is saying we are to live without. He said, “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” If Paul was suggesting that a believer could lose or forfeit the “adoption” provided in Christ’s finished work, as the result of “falling short,” (or even living like the unregenerated), our salvation would be contingent upon us – upon our behavior. If this were the case, none of us would live free from the “fear” Paul references. Furthermore, a performance based salvation mocks the atonement provided us “by grace through faith...not of works” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Paul made clear that he struggled with his fleshly nature and felt that he was not always “successful” in his effort to subdue the flesh. He also suggested that he did not enjoy or purposefully practice sinful deeds. With this in mind, he speaks to the recipients of this letter saying, “if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” (vs. 13) This has caused some confusion among believers. So, let’s look a little closer.

When Paul says “if you live” he is speaking in the continuous present tense. In other words, he is saying that if a person lives continuously and without interruption in the state of being “in the flesh” or “according to the flesh” they “will die.” The expression “will die” is actually best translated “in a present state of dying.” Therefore we know that his intention is to show that those who are “in the

flesh” or living “*according to the flesh*” without the interruption of the Spirit of God are “*in a present state of dying*” and will end their lives in hell.

Therefore, simply stated, those who live according to the flesh [as the unregenerated do] will die, but that those who have been regenerated [as believers are] are free from the power of sin and the consequences: death.

Those who have been regenerated have experienced the “interruption” and are therefore not those in “*in a present state of dying.*” We have been born of the Spirit, have been given the gift of eternal life, and are in a present state of living. We are adopted into the family of God.

Paul then reassures the believers by saying that we who have been born again should no longer live in fear, because we have been “*adopted*” and are “*children of God.*”

Read: Romans 6 through 8:11 and then do this lesson.

Word Wise:

Abba: Father

Barabbas: Son of the Father

True or False: Barabbas was set free from the penalty he deserved because Jesus was crucified in his place. (See Matthew 27:15-25)

True or False: I had a debt of sin that I could not pay but Jesus paid it all for me.

True or False: If I keep from sinning, I will be a child of God.

True or False: The deeds of the body Paul refers to in this text have been put to death because I have been identified with Jesus in His death. (See Romans 6:6-11)

True or False: As a believer I am adopted into the family of God.

True or False: As long as I keep from sinning I will remain a child of God.

True or False: Salvation is really a combined effort between me and God.

True or False: As a member of the family of God, I am an heir of God, and will receive an inheritance.

True or False: I should never fear being rejected by God.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 8:18-27 (NKJV)

Lesson 15

Romans 8:18–25 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. ²⁴ For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

In our last lesson we intentionally neglected the second half of verse 17 in order to carry it over into this lesson. In verse 17 we read, “...if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.” Now in this lesson we begin with verse 18, where we read, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” This then reveals the theme of lesson 15: patient suffering.

In Romans 7:24 Paul refers to the “body of death.” He connects the carnal “body” with the carnal life and sinful nature. He wrote, “I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” (Romans 7:14b-20)

Paul suffered with his sinful nature just like you and me. However, he knew that there was a day coming when he would be delivered from the “body of death” and be completely free from the sinful nature. This he calls “the redemption of our body.” (vs. 23) This is a tangible hope, not only for the believer in Christ, but for the created world.

Paul looked forward to the redemption of the body, and of the created world, with hope and faith. Trusting God enabled him to endure the difficulties. Therefore he could say, “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (vs. 18)

In the same way, you and I are strengthened in faith, knowing that life as we know it now is just a vapor, ready to vanish away (James 4:14), and is soon to be made new.

Within this passage we can see that Paul used the past and future tenses when describing our redemption. He says in the past tense that “we were saved” (vs. 24), and in the future tense that we

are “eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (vs. 23). Therefore, we can know with assurance that “we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,” (vs. 23) will also be physically redeemed and freed from the sufferings associated with the sinful and carnal nature.

When God gives the believer the indwelling and abiding person of the Holy Spirit as the “firstfruits,” He is showing us that His presence in us is like a “down payment” and guarantees that He has purchased us and will not fail to make good “on the whole deal.” We are sealed for safe passage and guaranteed as His own!

Romans 8:26-27

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

²⁷ Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

In verse 23, Paul says that believers wait, “groan within ourselves” (vs. 23) as we await the redemption promised. Therefore, God has given us the Holy Spirit as our intercessor. He prays for us “with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (vs. 26) Many have confused this with “praying in tongues.” However, a careful reading will show that this is not the believer praying in a tongue; it is the Holy Spirit Who is doing the praying. Furthermore, tongues are “uttered” and here we see that the “Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (vs. 26)

When the Holy Spirit is praying for us, God the Father is the One who understands and answers these prayers. This is perfect intercession! For, “He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints...” (vs. 27) It seems that as the Holy Spirit prays, He is inspired to do so – in part – because we don’t know what to pray for ourselves. “For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.” (vs. 26) Therefore, God the Holy Spirit is “working all things together for good,” (vs. 28) is interceding for us, “according to the will of God.” (vs. 27)

It is noteworthy to mention that the believer’s sufferings, we will endure, are not limited to a struggle with our own sin and our sinful nature. We also suffer as the result of the sin and sinful propensities of others. When people lie, steal, commit adultery or fornication, divorce, murder, etc. pain is caused to all. Therefore, we and all of creation groan, waiting for the Lord to make all things new. This God sees and intercedes for too.

Finally, believers will suffer persecution, some to the point of death. For the believer who gives up his or her life in exchange for the Lord and the glorious Gospel – death is gain.

Pray for the persecuted. Pray for the suffering. You will be praying in agreement with God and according to His will. He will hear and answer our prayers too – according to His own purposes and pleasure – on behalf of the saints.

Read: Ephesians 1:13-14 and 2 Corinthians 1:20-22

Word Wise:

Intercession: Prayer for others.

Supplication: Pray for those “supplies” we need.

Firstfruits: The first gatherings of the harvest. The “*firstfruits*” are symbolic of the whole harvest belonging to the Lord.

True or False: If I watch enough Christian TV and hear the messages given by faith preachers and positive mental attitude teachers, I can learn to live in victory, and not suffer in this life.

True or False: In this life we suffer.

True or False: There is a day coming when all suffering will be a thing of the past. This gives me hope.

True or False: Because God has redeemed me and given me His Holy Spirit, I have the “*firstfruits*” of the Holy Spirit and am guaranteed to receive all God has intended for me.

True or False: Groanings which cannot be uttered is the same thing as speaking in tongues.

True or False: The Holy Spirit prays for me “according to the will of God.”

True or False: I may not always pray “according to the will of God.”

True or False: I am comforted by knowing that God has begun a good work in me and will be faithful to fulfill it.

True or False: I am suffering, and I need prayer.

Prayer Needs:

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 8:28-39 (NKJV)

Lesson 16

Romans 8:28–39 (NKJV)

²⁸ *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.* ²⁹ *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.* ³⁰ *Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

³¹ *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* ³² *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?* ³³ *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.* ³⁴ *Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.* ³⁵ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* ³⁶ *As it is written:*

*“For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”*

³⁷ *Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.* ³⁸ *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Last week we learned that the believer's sufferings are the result of sin. However, our sufferings are not limited to a struggle with our own sin and sinful propensities, but are also the result of the sin and sinful propensities of others. When people lie, steal, commit adultery or acts of fornication, divorce, murder, etc., pain is caused to all. Therefore, we and all of creation groan, waiting for the Lord to make all things new. We also learned that God sees this and, by the Holy Spirit, intercedes for us.

Sin and the sinful nature of man is the reason there is suffering in the world. We know that God could have remedied the effects of sin in the world from the very beginning – but He didn't. Therefore, we know that God allows and uses the problem of sin to “*work together for good to those who love God.*” (8:28) This is the specific theme of the verse: how God uses our struggle with sin and the sinful nature.

At the conclusion of Romans 7, Paul expressed frustration with his sinful nature. He cried out, “*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*” (7:24) However, he also answered the “*who will deliver me*” with “*I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!*” (7:25) He then (through the natural transition to chapter 8) brings comfort to the believer when he shows the eclipsing nature of grace over the struggle with sin and sinful nature by saying, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*” (8:1) This he concludes knowing full well the remaining struggle with sin.

Therefore, as believers awaiting the climatic *“redemption of our body,”* (8:23) we know that God is at work in our lives – even amidst the struggle. He does this *“for good”* among *“those who are the called according to His purpose.”* (8:28)

This fact will be among the most comforting of truths in the Bible, if we genuinely believe it. Paul did. This is why he could say, *“and we know.”* Paul knew that God was at work in the smallest detail of every believer’s life. He is directing our path.

Many seem to believe that it impossible for God to be at work in *“all things.”* They contend that God cannot be at work in the life of a believer who is being imprisoned, battling cancer, abandoned by a spouse, suffering from a rape, or any other tragic or horrible circumstance. Furthermore, some deny that God could be at work in the life of a believer who is *“in sin.”* However, *“we know that all things work together for good”* in the lives of all who are His – even those who are sinning. Yes, God can work even through our disobedience.

God is working with us, all the time. Anything we go through has been *“Father-Filtered.”* God does not allow anything to occur in our lives that He is either unaware of, has not allowed, or has intentionally purposed. Therefore, as good or as bad as things may be, God, in His sovereignty, has either allowed, or caused, *“all things”* for His purposes, in and through us, *“for good.”*

We should all find great comfort by knowing that whatever it is we go through, the Lord is seeing it, allowing it, and working in it, for His glory and on behalf of we who are foreknown and *“predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”* (8:29) Patiently going through *“all things”* God allows in our lives is an excellent way for believers to shine in times of trial, and genuinely demonstrate what it is to trust the Lord with our lives.

I would suggest that we as believers are allowed to endure this struggle in order to keep us humble and dependent on the Lord. It is true that believers who come to know the Lord, and trust Him for Salvation, are forgiven all sin. However, as we have learned, even a man like Paul the Apostle was nonetheless struggling with his sinful nature while awaiting the redemption of the body. Believers who believe they have overcome their sinful propensities may fall into the trap of self-righteous pride and become judgmental of others. Their struggle with sin and the sin nature keeps them in a state of humility. Therefore, as we see ourselves in the light of Scripture, knowing our sinfulness, we maintain a state of thankfulness for the grace of God and the finished work of Jesus Christ our Lord.

In Romans 8:26 we learned that the Holy Spirit intercedes for the believers. Here in verse 34, Paul tells us that Jesus is *“at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”* He is our advocate and continually stands for us, and with us, before the Father. The fact that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us from within, and Jesus intercedes for us at the right hand of the Father should bring the greatest comfort to every believer. This is just another picture of the cooperative effort of the Godhead: God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and God the Son, working together for the good of those who are His. Therefore, in conclusion, we as believers can be fully assured in the salvation our Lord has provided us. We should never worry that our sin, sinful propensity, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, or any other created thing, could separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

He who called us has justified us. He who justified us has glorified us. God is for us; who can be against us? He is the one who, according to His great foreknowledge, predestined us to be conformed

to the image of His Son; and if we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together with Him. Therefore, we conclude that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us!

In our next study we will take a closer look at verses 29 through 30.

Read: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Optional Readings:

Genesis 37 & 39 – 45 (The Story of Joseph)

Daniel 6 (Daniel in the Lion's Den)

Word Wise:

True or False: God allows His children to go through great difficulties at times for His own purposes, and, we should, and can, trust Him – even if we don't fully understand what He is doing – or why.

True or False: Both the Bible and History are filled with stories of God's People suffering.

True or False: If I am truly faithful to God, I won't have to suffer.

True or False: For every believer there is a promise of deliverance from suffering.

True or False: God can work even in my disobedience.

True or False: I should disobey so I can see God work.

True or False: Nothing can separate me from the Lord.

True or False: I have trusted Christ for salvation, and I am confident that He has saved me.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 8:29-30 (NKJV)

Lesson 17

Romans 8:29–30 (NKJV)

²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Predestination has been and continues to be a hotly debated topic among Christians. Believers form into subtle and not so subtle variations of one or two groups. On the one hand are those who believe that God has indiscriminately chosen to save some men and women by His sovereign will out from the entire population of unworthy sinners and otherwise leave the remainder to suffer the damnation rightly deserved by all. On the other hand are those who believe that God has offered salvation to all, yet a great majority of those who could believe, refuse the free offer of salvation, thus forfeiting the redemption He offers them in Christ. In all, the debate continues.

The Bible does teach the doctrine of predestination. It should be accepted among those in the body of Christ – especially because believers are the recipients. Believers will find genuine rest in Christ when they understand that it is the same God Who inspired the Scriptures, Who predestinates the believer, and therefore completes the work of climatic redemption in every born again person. He alone initiates the relationship we have in Christ, and completes the work of justification, sanctification, and glorification – thus providing the believer all he or she needs in this life, and in the life to come.

Predestined to be like Jesus

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” (Romans 8:28–30)

Please notice that the God Who cannot learn foreknew us and predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son. In this passage, the predestination is to conformity to the image of the Son of God - Jesus. This is the joy of every believer. God has purposed in Himself to make us like Jesus. As we surrender to His leadership, we grow in grace, and therefore grow to be more and more like Him. Although we do not fully realize this complete transformation - in this temporal life, the final result is that we will, when the redemption we have in Christ is fully realized. This will occur when we see the Lord face to face. We are told, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John 3:2)

Furthermore, please notice that in the foreknowledge of God, those He foreknew, He called, justified, and glorified. The interesting thing is that all three verbs are in the aorist tense, active voice, and indicative mood. This means that the action stated by the verbs – called, justified, and glorified, is actually in the condition described by the verb. This means that state the believer is in has been accomplished, and that the condition of the believer is not potential, or probable, but actual! Finally, it means that the review of the said state – called, justified, and glorified, is declared in the form of a snapshot and describes the reality stated. Therefore we conclude that in the eternal foreknowledge of God, the condition of the believer has been complete – in Christ – from before the foundations of the world: before time. For this reason Paul can say, God “*chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love*” (Ephesians 1:4), and that He has “*predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.*” (Ephesians 1:5)

We now see that the predestination, to be like Jesus, was arranged for those He foreknew, and those He foreknew, He called, those He called, He justified, and those He justified, He glorified.

Predestined to Adoption

“...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.” (Ephesians 1:5–11)

Please notice that it is God’s purpose to adopt the believer. Please also notice that it is God’s good pleasure to adopt the believer. This is an awesome privilege. After all, God could have predestined us to be angels, to be slaves, etc. However, He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters of God.

The Question of Foreknowledge

God has declared that He knows all things – before time began. He said, “*Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.’” (Isaiah 46:9–10)*

We know that God cannot learn, knows all things, and does not trick Himself into not knowing. Therefore we need to ask, “What does ‘foreknowledge’ mean?” We need to ask the question because we know that there are some people whom the Lord says He never knew.

In Matthew we read, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:21–23)

If there are some people whom God says He never knew, and God knows all things, then we must conclude that to foreknow means more than to simply have the information and facts about the existence of the one foreknown.

The Greek word for “foreknowledge” is translated as “prognosis”. Accordingly the word means to know in advance. This seems obvious. However, while there may be little connection to the way we use the term prognosis today, the definition may provide some insight. Prognosis to the medical world means to know the end result of a disease or affliction. It may also mean the foreknowing of an end result. You may have heard the expression, “the patient has a good prognosis,” meaning that the person is on the pathway to healing, health, etc.

Therefore, using this model, we conclude that there must be something *in* the person, or *of* the person, God foreknows, that causes Him to “foreknow” rather than to “never know.”

Enter Faith

“...that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” (Ephesians 1:12–14)

Please understand then that the one who is chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world is foreknown by God and is therefore called, justified, and glorified, and then that those who are called, justified, and glorified, are those who have believed the word of truth, trusting Christ for salvation. The realization of this finished work must occur in time, according to the preordained plan of God, as foreknown to Him. Why? Because we did not exist prior to time, but are foreknown to God before time began.

Please also notice that the act of sealing with the Holy Spirit follows the exercise of saving faith, and that the sealing of the Holy Spirit guarantees the end result. The progression is clear: *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...*”

In order for there to be a “past tense” action: “*believed*” and “*trusted*,” time must be in the equation. So then, the person created by God, who in time, believes the “*word of truth, the gospel...*” is foreknown by God, with the “prognosis” of being called, justified, and glorified, before the foundation of the world – before time began.

Therefore, we know that God, Who dwells in eternity, from before time began, transcending time altogether, foreknows all who will in the time continuum believe, trusting Him for salvation.

God Does Not Trick Himself into Not Knowing

It is not possible that God should fail to know the people in the time continuum who will believe the *“word of truth”* and will, therefore, be adopted and made like Jesus.

To suggest that God somehow limits His foreknowledge and tricks Himself into not knowing all persons and all actions, implies that He must predestine randomly, predetermining the destiny of persons with no discretion – some to heaven and some to hell. If this were the case, faith would be unnecessary.

This will provide discussion material for Theologians and those studying soteriology. The primary argument will be that God has therefore based His work of regeneration, in some way or another, on man and not in His own sovereign will. However, I suggest that those who provide this argument should first consider the fact that were it not for God predetermining to save mankind from their sin, and therefore foreordaining Christ to His incarnation and sacrificial work in the time continuum, illuminating mankind in the truth, drawing men and women to Jesus, and granting faith to believe – all by His marvelous grace, no one would be saved! Therefore, we know that salvation is all of God and that mankind left alone would not and could not be saved.

Secondly, they should also note that it was because God foreknew that Adam and Eve would sin, that sin would be passed down to all men, that all men would therefore sin and would need a Savior, and that He preordained the incarnational work of Christ to save. This alone proves that God did not act randomly and did intentionally desire to save mankind.

Mankind, apart from God and His work of grace, could do nothing to provide for salvation. Man is utterly helpless in the work of redemption. Salvation is all of God, not of man, and is granted by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!

Finally, some might suggest that trusting Christ for salvation is a *“work”* of man and therefore suggest that trusting Christ for salvation is a form of human merit. However, they should remember that faith and works are continually contrasted in the Scriptures, and that salvation by works is clearly condemned.

In Ephesians 2:8–9 we read, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”* Herein faith and works are contrasted. Therefore to suggest that believing is a *“work”* is contradictory.

Christ Crucified Before the Foundation of the World?

It has been commonly communicated that Jesus was *“crucified before the foundation of the world”*. However, a careful look at this will show that Jesus was not crucified before the foundation of the world, but was foreordained to His incarnation and sacrifice before time began.

In Revelation 13:8 we read of those who during the Tribulation will worship the antichrist. It reads, *"All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."*

In this verse we need to examine the sentence structure. Are we reading that the names of those who worship the "beast" were not written in the Book of Life from the foundations of the earth, or are we reading that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world? In other words, does the expression "from the foundation of the world" refer to the "names" or to the "lamb?"

In Revelation 17:8 we see a similar verse. It reads, *"The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."*

Please note that in this passage there is an omission of the phrase "of the lamb slain" as found in 13:8. This supports the idea that the phraseology of 13:8 may refer to "the names" rather than "lamb slain." Furthermore, there is a consistency in the concept of names being written in the book of life from before the foundations of the world throughout the Scripture.

In Ephesians 1:4 we read, *"...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."* Additionally, when Paul wrote to Timothy he said, *"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began." (2 Timothy 1:8–9)*

Therefore, we can see that the emphasis is on the believer and the believer's blessings as foreknown and recorded "before the foundation of the world" – "before time began."

The emphasis in the New Testament on the timing of Jesus' crucifixion does not support the idea that He was crucified before time, but does support the fact that He was foreordained to crucifixion before time began. Peter wrote, *"...knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." (1 Peter 1:18–20)* Please notice that "foreordained" refers to the plan and "manifested in these last times for you" refers to the timing of the actual event. In Acts 2:23 we read that Jesus was, *"delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death."*

Therefore, I suggest that the correct understanding of Revelation 13:8 should be that the "names" of those who worship the beast were not "written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." This conclusively shows that God foreknew all those whose names were written in the book of life of the lamb slain – from before time began.

Time

It is commonly understood that when God created the heavens and the earth, He also created what we know as time. The time continuum had a beginning. This is indisputable. However, there is still debate over the future of time. Will it come to an end in the New Heaven and Earth, or will time simply be without end? Either way, this issue does not require an answer at this point.

What we do know is that the above verses clearly show that the God Who cannot learn, knows all things, and does not trick Himself into not knowing, has known us from before time began, has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and has therefore predestined His own to adoption, to be made like Jesus, and thus glorified.

We have also learned that Jesus was not crucified before the foundation of the world, but was foreordained to His incarnation and personal sacrifice before time began, in the eternal counsel of God, according to His own good pleasure.

His Good Pleasure

We know from the Scriptures that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He said, *“Say to them: ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live...”* (Ezekiel 33:11) Paul the apostle wrote that God desires all men to be saved, *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* (1 Timothy 2:3–4) We also know that God loves the whole world. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life,”* (John 3:16) and that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. *“And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”* (1 John 2:2)

Jesus said that after His crucifixion He would draw all men to Himself. *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.”* (John 12:32) And finally, we know that God has made Himself known to all men, *“because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.”* (Romans 1:19–20) Therefore, all men are given the opportunity to believe.

With this in mind, we can safely conclude that the call to salvation is universal in the time continuum, and that the resulting work of grace – calling, justifying, and glorifying of the believer is foreknown to God, and therefore the ones He knows will believe, are the ones predestined before time began – in eternity past.

God cannot learn, knows all things, and does not trick Himself into not knowing. Therefore we see that predestination is at least in part subject to the foreknowledge of God. Otherwise, the Lord would have no choice but to trick Himself into not knowing who would respond in the time continuum, in order to act indiscriminately toward those He chose to save.

In Conclusion

Every person can know that God calls, justifies, and glorifies those who believe and that He foreknows and predestinates believers to adoption and sanctification. These believers should therefore

live in a peace that passes all understanding and experience genuine rest in the complete work of Christ.

We Love Him Because He First Loved Us

God foreordained and initiates the plan of salvation, foreknows all of His own, illuminates and draws us to Himself, and does it all by grace. Mankind, as undeserving sinners, claim no right to salvation, have nothing to offer God in exchange for their souls, can do nothing to save themselves, and have merited nothing to attain or maintain their salvation.

Salvation is all of God, all of grace, by faith alone, in Christ alone. We love Him because He first loved us.

Read: Ephesians 1

Word Wise:

Sanctification: to be set apart, to be holy.

Questions

True or False: God acts randomly in the work of salvation.

True or False: Man is in part responsible for his or her own salvation and should therefore share in the credit.

True or False: God predestines some people to hell, and they can do nothing about it.

True or False: God cannot learn.

True or False: God could have predestined us to be His lawn furniture.

True or False: God predestined us to be adopted into His family.

True or False: Time was created.

True or False: God initiates our salvation.

True or False: If man was left to himself, he would be helpless to save himself.

True or False: Faith is a gift from God.

True or False: Salvation is by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 9:1-5 (NKJV)

Lesson 18

Romans 9:1–5 (NKJV)

“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”

As we begin to look at Romans 9, we will see that the love of God, manifested in Christ, is good news for Israel – and for the gentiles too. We will see that chapters 9, 10, and 11, outline God’s dealings with Israel from the past, to the present, and into the future. Once we arrive at chapter 11, we will see that by the time of Jesus’ return to the earth (The Second Coming), all the Jews living on earth at that time will be saved. However, even then, just like you and me, they will only be saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ the Lord. There is no other way!

“Accursed”

Most of the Jews in the first century rejected Jesus as Lord and Messiah. Even though the first “Christians” were all Jews and that there were thousands saved within the first years, many rejected Jesus, and thus Paul grieved for them. He said, *“I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren.”* This is a love difficult to fully comprehend. Paul was actually saying that if it were possible, he would have been willing to be “accursed” from Christ, if it would have provided salvation for his people Israel. However, hear me well, Paul could not be “accursed” for anyone!

Paul wasn’t the first person to display this kind of love – Moses had also communicated a similar passion.

After Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, he implored the Lord (following a rebellious and idolatrous act committed by the people) essentially saying “forgive them or blot me out of Your book.” We read in Exodus, *“Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, ‘Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written.’”* (Exodus 32:31–32) It seems Moses was willing to be “accursed” for his people Israel. The similarities between Moses’ intercession and Paul’s “wish” are obvious.

As history reveals, God was willing to forgive Israel in the days of Moses, was willing to forgive them in Paul’s day, and is willing to forgive them now! The love seen in Moses and Paul could only be the love of God visible in them. This is the love manifested in God’s only begotten Son – Jesus. However, for Him it was not a “wish.” It was a reality – only possible in Him. Jesus was “accursed” for us!

When Paul said, *“For I could wish that I myself were accursed...”* it was a *“wish”* – a *“wish”* without possibility. Paul could no more be accursed for Israel than could Moses, you, or me. Only Jesus was capable of redeeming sinful men; and only Jesus could be *“accursed”* in our place for our sin. Jesus was sinless and, therefore, able to take the punishment of sin and overcome its consequences. Jesus, as the sinless Son of God, was not Himself subject to the eternal consequences of sin; death and hell could not hold him. Furthermore, Jesus was not *“sent to hell for an eternity without God”* but, as the sinless Son of God, conquered sin, death, and hell, once for all. He was *“accursed”* for us. Had Moses, Paul, you, or me suffered the curse for Israel – or anyone else, we would be separated from God for eternity. We are completely incapable of gaining the victory only Christ could obtain. He died in our place, for our sins, because He had no sin of His own.

In Galatians we read, *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’)”* (Galatians 3:13) The Law pointed out sin and sentenced the lawbreaker to death. However, Jesus died for us, removing from us *“the curse of the Law”* and providing us forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life.

“The adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises.”

Secondly, we must notice that Paul says it was to Israel that God committed *“the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises.”* Paul will make the case that *“the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises”* were not initially sent to, or given to, the Gentiles. This may come as a surprise to you. It certainly did to the Romans. For this reason Paul warns the Roman Gentiles to be humble about their privilege in the Lord. (We will examine this when we get to Romans 11:19-20)

The *“the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises”* gave them special privilege. However, they rejected God and, therefore, forfeited the blessings. However, as Paul has laid out in Chapters 6-8, we see that God uses our sin (and the sins of others) to teach us. He will work with Israel in a similar manner. God is not finished working with Israel and will fulfill His good pleasure in them. He is Sovereign, and His Sovereign purpose is at work in Israel today – just as much as it was in the days of Moses. God righteously and justly does that which is pleasing to Him to bring about His plan.

When Paul wrote *“from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came,”* he was referring to Jesus’ natural lineage. Jesus – the Son of God was also the Son of Man: the Son of David. Prophecy throughout the Old Testament is loaded with information documenting – in advance – the family line of Jesus. Jesus has both natural right to the Throne of David and Spiritual authority as God the Son.

This short list below is only a sampling of the proofs of Jesus’ Messiahship.

Read:

	Prophecy	Fulfillment	
1	Messiah would be born of a woman.	Genesis 3:15	Matthew 1:20, Galatians 4:4
2	Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1, Luke 2:4-6
3	Messiah would be born of a virgin.	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:22-23, Luke 1:26-31
4	Messiah would come from the line of Abraham.	Genesis 12:3, Genesis 22:18	Matthew 1:1, Romans 9:5
5	Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac.	Genesis 17:19, Genesis 21:12	Luke 3:34
6	Messiah would be a descendant of Jacob.	Numbers 24:17	Matthew 1:2
7	Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah.	Genesis 49:10	Luke 3:33, Hebrews 7:14
8	Messiah would be heir to King David's throne.	2 Samuel 7:12-13, Isaiah 9:7	Luke 1:32-33, Romans 1:3

Word Wise:

Vicarious: To Suffer or experience in the place of another.

Questions

True or False: Paul's "countrymen" were the Jews.

True or False: If God would have let him, Paul could have suffered in place of the Jews he wanted to see saved.

True or False: Paul and Moses were both deeply motivated to see the people of Israel saved.

True or False: No one but Jesus could suffer the consequences of sin for Israel – or for anyone else.

True or False: Jesus was sinless and that is why He is the only one who could suffer on behalf of another.

True or False: Most of the Jews in the first century rejected Jesus as Lord and Messiah.

True or False: God was willing to forgive Israel in the days of Moses, was willing to forgive them in Paul's day, and is willing to forgive them now.

True or False: *"The adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises"* were given to the Jews – not the gentiles.

True or False: God is not finished working with Israel and will fulfill His good pleasure in them.

True or False: When Paul says *"according to the flesh, Christ came,"* it means Jesus was born just like everyone else in the world.

True or False: When Paul says *"according to the flesh, Christ came,"* it is a reference to his family lineage.

True or False: Jesus is the rightful heir to the throne.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 9:6-9 (NKJV)

Lesson 19

Romans 9:6–9 (NKJV)

⁶ *But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,*
⁷ *nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.'*
⁸ *That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. Romans 2:25–29 (NKJV)*

God, according to His own sovereign will, chose Israel to be a people group to whom, and through whom, He would and will make Himself known. This was His intention from before the foundations of the world. His decision to choose Israel was not based on anything good or bad found in Israel; was not based on any acquiescence, submission, exercise of faith, or voluntary desire of the people; it was, and is entirely, God's decision.

Israel as a people group are the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. His decision to choose these men in particular was also completely sovereign. He could have chosen anyone and without any difficulty accomplished His divine purpose.

In His divine sovereignty, the primary purpose was to set in motion a family line through which the Messiah would come. This fact is why Paul said the *"Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."* (vs. 4-5) Paul was saying that Christ Jesus (as God incarnate) is that descendent. He is the heir of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *"according to the flesh."* (vs. 5)

God's sovereign election of Israel did not and does not suggest that all the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are promised eternal life. Every man, woman, and child must trust God for salvation. Paul makes this very clear when he says, *"For they are not all Israel who are of Israel."* (vs.6) He is saying that those who are the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and who trust the Lord for salvation, are considered the *"Israel of God."* Jesus gave us the antithesis to this when He told a group of Israelites who did not believe that they were *"of their father the devil."* (John 8:44) The distinction between the two groups was, and is, faith in God.

Earlier in our study we read, *"he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."* (Romans 2:28-29)

Isaac or Ishmael?

⁹ *For this is the word of promise: 'At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.'*

Ishmael was born to Abraham and Sarah as the result of their human effort to help God keep His promise. Much could be said about this “human effort” and many applications could be given. However, for the purposes in this study, we will refrain from going too far into it. What we do need to develop is the fact that God had elected to use Isaac as the progenitor (father) of Jacob – not Ishmael.

Ishmael was not the child of promise; Isaac was. This by no means suggests that God did not love Ishmael, or that God disallowed Ishmael the offer of salvation. Furthermore, the fact that God had sovereignly chosen to have the Messiah come through the family line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not mean that Ishmael’s descendents were prevented the offer of salvation. They, like all of Israel, and/or all who make up the Gentile nations, could, by faith alone, through grace alone, be saved. God had simply chosen to use Isaac (the son of promise) as the miraculously-born son, for His development of the nation and people of Israel, without the help of man: Abraham, Sarah or Hagar! God did not and does not need the help of man to accomplish his purposes. Moreover, He rejects and hates it!

Read: Genesis 15:1 – 18:15 and Genesis 21:1 – 22:18
(The Story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac)

Word Wise:

Progenitor: Forefather: the person from whom a son or daughter has their natural birth.

Questions:

True or False: Abraham and Sarah tried to help God fulfill his promises by invoking the help of Hagar.

True or False: God does not need our help to keep His promises.

True or False: God rejects our help and considers it a “work of the flesh.”

True or False: God chose to develop a nation through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

True or False: God loved Ishmael but chose to elect Isaac, the one through whom He would develop the nation of Israel.

True or False: All the people of Israel are automatically saved because they are the “children of Israel.”

Notes:

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Ladies Bible Study
Romans 9:10-14 (NKJV)

Lesson 20

Romans 9:10–14 (NKJV)

¹⁰ *And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac*
¹¹ *(for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls),* ¹² *it was said to her, 'The older shall serve the younger.'* ¹³ *As it is written, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.'*

¹⁴ *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!*

God “*hated*” Esau because he didn’t value his “*birthright*.”

In Genesis we read that, “*Esau, despised his birthright.*” (Genesis 25:34b) The “*birthright*” he “*despised*” would have made him (as the first born son of Isaac) the rightful heir to the promise God made to his grandfather Abraham – and to his father Isaac.

God made clear that Abraham’s son Isaac would be heir to the covenant promise He had made him. We read, “*Then God said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.’ Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?’ And Abraham said to God, ‘Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!’ Then God said: ‘No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.’ Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.” Genesis 17:15–22 (NKJV) The Scriptures also tell us that, “*Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.*” (Genesis 25:5)*

Isaac’s sons (Jacob and Esau) would have known this. Therefore, Esau was aware of the fact that as the firstborn to Isaac, the “*promise*” (vs. 9) would fall to him, making him a father to the nation of Israel – and recipient of the promised covenant blessing. However, he “*despised his birthright*” and saw no value in it. He considered the promise of God and its associated covenant a small thing and, therefore, snubbed the promise. By doing this he demonstrated unbelief in the God of his grandfather, Abraham, and of his father, Isaac. This made him the enemy of God, and therefore, God “*hated*” him.

If you read through Genesis you will see that the progression in the storyline is loaded with sin: unbelief in Esau, and manipulation, lies, and deception in Jacob. However, you will also see that Jacob valued the “*birthright*” and therefore the promised covenant – showing faith in God. For this reason, God said, “*Jacob [as an individual] I have loved, but Esau [as an individual] I have hated.*”

Jacob pictures faith in God and Esau unbelief – even as Isaac pictured faith and Ishmael unbelief!

“Hated”

Theologians have long debated the expression, *“Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”* Some suggest that God loved Jacob more than He did Esau. That is to say, that the *“hate”* in this context simply means *“to love less.”* However, it would do us well to recognize that God is quite capable of loving with a perfect love and hating with perfect hatred equally and at the same time.

We know that *“God so loved the world...”* that He is willing to save the worst sinner. However, we also read in Scripture that *“The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity,”* (Psalm 5:5) and also that *“the LORD tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.”* (Psalm 11:5) Therefore, to suggest that God *“loves less”* may not be the best way to represent Him. It seems best to suggest that God is quite capable of loving with a perfect love and hating with perfect hatred – equally and at the same time; and if this be the case, then we must understand what causes God to hate. The answer is clear, for *“God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.”* (Psalm 7:11) He hates *“all workers of iniquity.”* (Psalm 5:5) However, God loves those same *“workers of iniquity”* and has made provision for their salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. The persons provided with salvation are they who turn to the Lord in humility and trust Him to save them.

Two People and Two Nations

We read, *“Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, ‘If all is well, why am I like this?’ So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her: ‘Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.’”* Genesis 25:21–23 (NKJV) Esau was the older, and Jacob the younger. The two nations are Edom and Israel.

We must also look at the context of this passage to make a determination about exactly what Paul is communicating with this illustration. The text reads, *“As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.’”* (vs. 13) Where was it *“written?”* The book of Malachi!

In Malachi we read, *“‘I have loved you,’ says the LORD. ‘Yet you say, ‘In what way have You loved us?’ Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?’ says the LORD. ‘Yet Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.’ Even though Edom [Esau’s descendents] has said, ‘We have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places,’ thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘They may build, but I will throw down; they shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, and the people [not person] against whom the LORD will have indignation forever. Your eyes shall see, and you shall say, ‘The LORD is magnified beyond the border of Israel.’”* (Malachi 1:2–5) Therefore we can see that Paul is referring to the two nations rather than the two persons. This is the main theme of chapter 9. Paul is showing God’s divine purpose in electing the nation of Israel – to whom, and through whom, He will make Himself known.

Sovereign Election

God, in His sovereignty, tells us that He made the choice to use Jacob rather than Esau for His own purposes – before they were born, and before they could do *“any good or evil.”* We read, *“for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls.”* (vs. 11) Therefore, we know that in this case, very specifically, God tells us that He did not choose to use Jacob because He knew (in advance) that Jacob valued the *“birthright”* and Esau *“despised”* it.

We have already learned that God knows all things, cannot learn, and that He does not trick Himself into not knowing. Therefore, we know that although He knew in advance all that would occur in *“time”* and also that without tricking Himself into not knowing, He chose Jacob without bias. He wants us to know that His right to choose, and purpose in choosing, is not dependent on man, man’s behavior, or man’s will. *“He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”* (Romans 9:15-16) We must keep in mind that the point Paul is making here does not concern the specific salvation of Jacob or Esau (or anyone else for that matter), but concerns the *“election”* (vs. 11) of Israel as a nation. Therefore, God could specifically say that he loved the person Jacob because he believed God and valued the *“birthright”*, and hated the person Esau because of his unbelief and bad behavior in despising the *“birthright”*, but in spite of this fact, chose to use *“Jacob”* (also known as Israel) as a nation, rather than *“Esau”* (also known as Edom) to fulfill His purposes in and through the nations.

In addition, when Paul says, *“the older shall serve the younger.”* *As it is written...*” (Romans 9:12b–13a), he is pointing us to the fact that he had the nations in mind, not the persons.

Does the election of Israel suggest that all the people of Israel are saved because they are the “chosen?”

Earlier we learned that God’s sovereign election of Israel did not, and does not, suggest that all the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are promised eternal life. Every man, woman, and child must trust God for salvation. Therefore we must remember that this election was not to salvation but to the covenant promise God made to Abraham with its associated blessings. We have learned that *‘the Israel of God’* are those persons whom, as descendents of Abraham, trust in God and value His promises. Therefore, inasmuch as God has elected the nation and people of Israel to be those to whom, and through whom, He would make Himself known, those within Israel must believe Him for salvation.

Finally, please remember that this topic specifically deals with two people, *and* two nations. However, Paul moves us beyond the two persons and to the two nations within the discussion. Furthermore, as mentioned above, neither Jacob nor Esau were disallowed salvation, nor were any of the individuals in either Israel or Edom.

Read: Genesis 24:1–67, 25:1–34, 27:1–46
(The story of Isaac, Rebecca, Jacob and Esau)
Obadiah

Word Wise: Sovereignty

"The sovereignty of God means that He has total control of all things past, present and future. Nothing happens that is out of His knowledge and control. All things are either caused by Him or allowed by Him for His own purposes and through His perfect will and timing. He is the only absolute and omnipotent ruler of the universe and is sovereign in creation, providence and redemption."

True or False: Esau demonstrated unbelief in the God of his grandfather, Abraham, and of his father, Isaac.

True or False: To suggest that God loves some people less than He does others may not be the best way to represent Him.

True or False: It seems best to suggest that God is quite capable of loving with a perfect love and hating with perfect hatred – equally and at the same time.

True or False: God loves the "*workers of iniquity*" and has provided them salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

True or False: In this chapter, Paul is showing God's divine purpose in electing the nation of Israel – to whom, and through whom, He will make Himself known to the whole world.

True or False: This chapter is only about two people – not two nations.

True or False: We know that God did not choose to use Jacob because He knew (in advance) that Jacob valued the "*birthright*" and Esau "*despised*" it. It was simply His will and purpose – and had nothing to do with what He foreknew!

True or False: God wants us to know that His right to choose, and purpose in choosing, is not dependent on man, man's behavior, or man's will. (See Romans 9:15-16)

True or False: Paul makes the point that God's sovereign choice to use Jacob rather than Esau did not concern the specific salvation of these two men – or anyone else for that matter, but concerns the "*election*" of Israel as a nation.

True or False: God's sovereign election of Israel did not, and does not, suggest that all the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are promised eternal life.

True or False: Every man, woman, and child must trust God for salvation.

True or False: "*The Israel of God*" are those persons whom, as descendants of Abraham, trust in God and value His promises.

True or False: God is always motivated by His great love for us and therefore I can always trust him.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 9:15-24 (NKJV)

Lesson 21

Romans 9:15–24 (NKJV)

¹⁵ *For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.'* ¹⁶ *So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.*

¹⁷ *For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.'* ¹⁸ *Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.*

¹⁹ *You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?'* ²⁰ *But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?'* ²¹ *Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?*

²² *What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory,* ²⁴ *even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

If God had not planned for the redemption of mankind, no one would be saved. But the good news is that God *"desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."* (1 Timothy 2:4) Therefore, in the sovereign purpose of God, He chose to extend mercy and grace to undeserving people – like you and me. This is the meaning of the citation, *"I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion"* (vs.15).

As depraved human beings we have no capacity to save ourselves. We are utterly helpless! *"So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy."* (vs. 16)

We understand that if God had not desired to save, and had not planned for our redemption in Christ, mankind would have no possibility of salvation. Even if we did all we could, with the best possible motives, our will to be saved would utterly fall flat. We are all subject the mercy of God – and were it not for His mercy, we would all be lost, and destined to an endless eternity without Him. We can be thankful that God is merciful and that He does desire our salvation. This fact has inspired the statement, *"Salvation is all of God and not of man."*

God has planned for and given opportunity to all men; and although many refuse Him, He does not refrain from using those men (or women). There are times that God will not only use them to do good, but can and does use them to do evil.

The example Paul uses to support this fact is how God used Pharaoh.

As King of Egypt, the Pharaoh was capable of doing right or wrong. However, when Moses sought for the release of the Children of Israel, the Pharaoh hardened his heart and refused to do as requested. Some will argue that God hardened Pharaoh's heart and that he had no choice in the matter – and they would be right! God told Moses that he would harden the Pharaoh's heart. *“And the LORD said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.”* (Exodus 4:21 NKJV)

Citing the Lord, Paul refers to Exodus 9:16 when he says, *“For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.”* You see, God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that He could miraculously and powerfully deliver the Children of Israel before the eyes of the Egyptians – and *“all the earth.”* In doing so, they would come to know that God is the Lord. He told Moses, *“And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not heed you, so that I may lay My hand on Egypt and bring My armies and My people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them.”* (Exodus 7:3–5 NKJV) Therefore, we see that God hardened Pharaoh's heart with a purpose – and that purpose was to make Himself known – in *“all the earth.”*

In Romans 9:6-9 we learned that God, according to His own sovereign will and purpose, chose Israel to be a people group to whom, and through whom, He would and will make Himself known. This was His intention from before the foundations of the world. His decision to choose Israel was not based on anything good or bad found in Israel; was not based on any acquiescence, submission, exercise of faith, or voluntary desire of the people; but was, and is, entirely God's decision.

We also learned that God's sovereign election of Israel did not and does not suggest that all the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are or were promised eternal life by simply being a member of the “family.” We know that every man, woman, and child must trust the Lord for salvation. This we need to keep in mind!

On the other hand, the fact that God used Pharaoh the way He did, does not suggest that He had refused eternal salvation to him (or to the Egyptian people). Sadly this is the “jump” many people make.

Also note that there is no reference in Scripture suggesting that the Pharaoh wanted to let the people go and do the right thing. Therefore, God hardening his heart does not suggest that He refused to let the Pharaoh do right. God simply firmed up the Pharaoh's predisposition – for His own purposes. God was using a rebellious pagan man known as Pharaoh to do what was already known to be the propensity of his heart. If God had not “hardened” Pharaoh's heart, he would have nonetheless been a God-rejecting pagan man. God simply insured that the wicked man, whose wicked heart was in opposition to God – and to the people of Israel, do what He purposed, in order to show the whole of them (the Egyptians) who He was – and therefore give them the opportunity to see and trust Him. God hardening the Pharaoh's heart was an act of mercy designed to make Himself known so that Israel, Pharaoh, and all of Egypt could see who He is.

God can use sin (ours and the sins of others) to teach us. Therefore, in this case, we see Him working with Israel, the Pharaoh, and Egypt to teach them – and *“all the earth.”* God is sovereign; and in His sovereign purpose He works to bring about His plan – and is righteous in doing so.

As stated above – please allow me to reiterate: God, according to His own sovereign will and purpose, chose Israel to be a people group to whom, and through whom, He would and will make Himself known to the entire world. This was His intention from before time began. He did this, as a part of His divine plan, with a primary purpose of setting in motion the family line through which the Messiah would become their Savior; the Savior of the whole world.

Some will argue that God was unjust to use Pharaoh in this way. They will say that God is unjust and unrighteous to use men to do good – or evil. They will say that the “free will” of man is being violated. I disagree!

God has and does give men *limited* free will. We do have the freedom (free will) to act on the propensities of our sin nature – but we don’t have the capability to save ourselves from that sin. We have the “free will” to end our lives prematurely, but we don’t have the privilege of choosing when, where, or to whom we will be born. God, in His sovereignty, chooses our parents as well as where and when we will be born. Would you say that is unfair? I think not!

In similarity, God has the freedom to use sinful man as He chooses. He does not make men sin and does not cause them to do evil. He simply allows it for His purposes. This is why Paul could say, *“You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?’ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?”* (vss. 19-21) God can and does use unrighteous men to bring “honor” to Himself. In the same way, God can and does use unrighteous men as vessels of “dishonor.” He does this to fulfill His purpose and plan. One might suggest that God used Moses as a vessel of honor and Pharaoh as a vessel of dishonor.

You may ask, “Why?” Paul answers the inquiry himself in the form of a rhetorical question. *“What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”* (vss. 22-24) In short, he answers the question within the question; *“That He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.”* (For “prepared beforehand” see notes on Romans 8:29-30)

In the next lesson we will look at God’s foreordained plan with and for the Gentiles, for the “ecclesia” – the called out ones: AKA the Church.

Read: Exodus 3 – 12

Word Wise:

Depravity: The innate corruption of the human nature, due to original sin.
Moral corruption; and wickedness

Pharaoh: A common title for the ancient kings of Egypt

Questions

True or False: If God had not planned for the redemption of mankind, no one would be saved.

True or False: Man is essentially good.

True or False: It was God's choice to save. If He had not chosen to save us, we would deserve an eternal hell. Therefore, we know that God is a God of mercy.

True or False: As depraved human beings we have no capacity to save ourselves. We are utterly helpless!

True or False: As King of Egypt, the Pharaoh was capable of doing right or wrong.

True or False: There is no reference in Scripture suggesting that the Pharaoh wanted to let the people go and do the right thing. Therefore, God hardening his heart does not suggest that He refused to let the Pharaoh do right.

True or False: God was unjust to use Pharaoh the way He did.

True or False: God has the freedom to use sinful man as He chooses but does not make men sin and does not cause them to do evil.

True or False: God can and does use unrighteous men to bring "*honor*" to Himself.

True or False: God can and does use unrighteous men as vessels of "*dishonor.*"

True or False: God is willing to show His wrath and to make His power known, that He might make known the riches of His glory to those He calls, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.

True or False: God offers salvation to some people and refuses to offer it to others.

Notes:

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 9:25-29 (NKJV)

Lesson 22

²² *What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?*

²⁵ *As He says also in Hosea: 'I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved.' ²⁶ 'And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, "You are not My people," there they shall be called sons of the living God.'*

²⁷ *Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: 'Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. ²⁸For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.'*

²⁹ *And as Isaiah said before: 'Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.'*

In our last lesson we learned that God was willing “to show His wrath and to make His power known,” and that He, “endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,” “that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.”

The context points back to God’s patience with the Pharaoh – on behalf of the Children of Israel; however, it also looks forward in time – through history and to the present.

God has patiently endured the rebellious on behalf of the redeemed. God knew, from before the foundations of the world, that many people would refuse His gracious offer of salvation and would be damned. However, He chose to endure “with much longsuffering” those persons, who would experience His wrath, that He might make known His glory on those who would trust Him for salvation.

This week we examine God’s foreordained plan with and for the “ecclesia:” the called out ones; a group of people who make up the saved.

Concerning Israel

In the book of Hosea we read about God’s dealings with the Northern Tribes of Israel. He is speaking to them about their sin; and in so doing, He tells them that they are “not His people.” (See Hosea 1-2)

However, God used Hosea to show (through illustration) that though Israel is an adulterous wife, He was nonetheless married to her – and would ultimately bring her to repentance and restoration. Therefore, these people are “the seed” referred to in verse 28-29. “For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.’ And as Isaiah said before: ‘Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.’ ”

Israel in the Tribulation

As we will see when we study Romans 11, only a small number of the Jews will survive the Tribulation Period. However, all the living Jews alive at that time of Jesus' Second Coming will turn to Him and believe. Therefore, these people are also alluded to in the passage. *"For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth." And as Isaiah said before: 'Unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.'"*

During the Tribulation, the severe displeasure of God will be poured out on the inhabitants of the whole world. However, the fundamental purpose of the Tribulation (as stated in Daniel 9) is disciplinary judgment intended specifically for Israel.

Paul's use of the passages in Isaiah, (Isaiah 1:9, and 10:22-23) shows that God saved a remnant in historical Israel, but he also uses the passage to look forward in time to a future remnant: those who will be saved at the end of the Great Tribulation. (See Romans 11:25-27) The use of this passage the way Paul uses it is called "The Law of Double Reference."

It is certain that Paul had this in mind when he quoted from Isaiah. God, the God of war, *"Sabaoth"* would have finished off the Jews completely in the past, as He did the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, He chose to save a remnant. They were *"the vessels of mercy"* at that time. There are *"vessels of mercy"* now in the church Age, and there will be *"vessels of mercy"* in the future.

Furthermore, when Paul says, *"He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth,"* (vs. 28) it is clear that he had the Tribulation in mind! Jesus said, *"unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved."* (Matthew 24:22) This passage relates directly to the Tribulation, and Paul knew it.

The Church-Age *Believing* Jews

God calls the Church-Age Jews, who have trusted Jesus as Messiah, a "peculiar people." *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."* 1 Peter 2:9–10 (NKJV)

There will only be a small number of Jews who will believe during the Church Age. They are a part of the "remnant" of verse 27. *"Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved."*

The Church: Jew and Gentile

While Paul's primary case here in The Book of Romans is that God is not finished with Israel, he is also making a case for the Church in the Church Age. God is now (in the present age) calling out from the masses, a people unto Himself of both Jew and Gentile. Paul shows (through The Law of Double Reference) that those who were "not His people" from Israel, and those who were "not His people" from among the Gentiles populations, will make up a unique people group he calls the Church. As we will see, the Gentiles do not replace Israel, they are grafted in to her "root and fatness": promise and blessings. (Romans 11)

Read: Hosea 1-2
1 Peter 1:1-2
Daniel 9
Matthew 24:22
Romans 11

Word Wise:

Ecclesia: Called-out ones

Sabaoth: Hosts, Armies, War (Lord of Hosts / Lord of the Armies)

The Law of Double Reference: A hermeneutical rule applied to a passage of Scripture indicating a “near and far fulfillment.”

Questions

True or False: God patiently endures the rebellious on behalf of the redeemed.

True or False: God knew, from before the foundations of the world, that many people would refuse His gracious offer of salvation and would be damned.

True or False: God chose to endure “*with much longsuffering*” those persons, who would experience His wrath, that He might make known His glory on those who would trust Him for salvation.

True or False: The “ecclesia:” are the called out ones.

True or False: God used Hosea to show (through illustration) that though Israel is an adulterous wife, He was nonetheless married to her – and will ultimately bring her to repentance and restoration.

True or False: Only a small number of the Jews will survive the Tribulation Period.

True or False: All the living Jews alive at that time of Jesus’ Second Coming will turn to Him and believe.

True or False: During the Tribulation, the severe displeasure of God will be poured out on the inhabitants of the whole world. However, the fundamental purpose of the Tribulation is disciplinary judgment intended specifically for Israel.

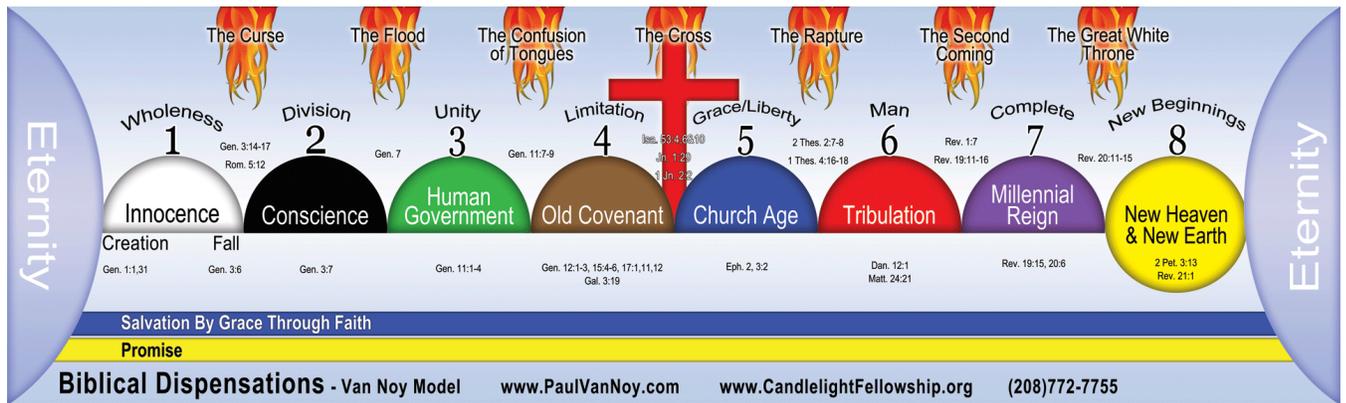
True or False: The Law of Double Reference is hermeneutical rule applied to a passage of Scripture that indicates a “near and far fulfillment.”

True or False: Paul’s primary case in The Book of Romans is that God is not finished with Israel.

True or False: The Church is a “called out” group of people, made up of both Jew and Gentile.

True or False: Paul includes the Gentiles in the phrase “*not His people.*” They will be God’s people, like the Jews, and be included with those who are called “*my people.*”

True or False: The Gentiles do not replace Israel, they are grafted in to her “*root and fatness*”: promise and blessings God made to Israel.



Notes:

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 9:30-33 (NKJV)

Lesson 23

³⁰ *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; ³¹ but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. ³² Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. ³³ As it is written: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.'* "

The Jews Miss Out

The Jews who reject Jesus forfeit the promised salvation available to them. Their unbelief in Jesus is a rejection of God. When Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me,"* John 14:6 (NKJV) He left no other options. When Paul said, *"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,"* 1 Timothy 2:5 (NKJV) he made clear that no other mediator is available. When John said, *"Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also,"* 1 John 2:23 (NKJV) he was making known – in no uncertain terms – that those who reject the Son of God, have rejected the Father, and would therefore miss out on the salvation they had hoped for throughout their generations.

Jesus told the Jewish leaders who rejected Him, *"I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father." They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."* John 8:37–47 (NKJV) This was a scathing indictment against those He came to save.

One of the many reasons the Jews rejected Jesus was their focus on personal righteousness based solely on keeping the Law. They spent so much time on the externals that they sidestepped the condition of their hearts and their need for a savior.

The Purpose of the Law

Paul said that the law was *“a tutor to bring us to Christ.”* (Galatians 3:24) However, most Jews felt that if they were diligent in keeping the Law, God would see their *“work”* and equate it as righteousness. However, all of Biblical history shows us that God does not see man’s work as worthy of blessing; He sees their faith *“and accounts it as righteousness.”*

Paul told the Galatians, *“Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? –just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.”* Galatians 3:5–7 (NKJV) (cf. Genesis 15:6)

This is why Paul says, *“...Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’ ”* (vs. 31-33)

The Stumbling Stone and Rock of Offense

Isaiah, Peter, and Paul reference the fact that the Jews who reject the Lord will suffer the consequences. To those who don’t believe, Jesus will be a *“stumbling stone”* and *“rock of offense;”* but to those who believe, He is life, hope, and peace.

In Isaiah we read, *“Therefore thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.”* Isaiah 28:16 (NKJV) In other words, whoever believes in Jesus is not acting foolishly and will not be ashamed.

Peter wrote, *“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.’ Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone,’ and ‘A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.’ They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”* 1 Peter 2:4–10 (NKJV)

The Gentile Recipients

We have already seen that God is not finished with Israel and still has a future plan for them. However, now in the Church Age, those who were *“not His people”* and who have been *“called out”* from among the Gentile populations will, with the believing Jews, make up a unique people group called the Church. How? By grace through faith! (See Ephesians 2:8-9)

Thus, the *“Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith.”* (vs. 30) and have therefore been *“grafted in”* (Romans 11:17-20) to the promised blessing.

Word Wise:

Cornerstone: In early construction, a cornerstone was the stone placed at the corner of a building. It was used as the foundational marker. Everything built into or upon the building was built from the vantage point provided by the cornerstone. The cornerstone was generally one of the largest, most solid, and most carefully constructed pieces in the structure.

True or False: The Jews who reject Jesus forfeit the promised salvation available to them.

True or False: If the Jews are diligent in keeping the Law, God will see their “work” and equate it as righteousness.

True or False: Both Jews and Gentiles may be included in the Church – by faith in Christ alone.

True or False: God has blessed the Gentile people by allowing them to be recipients of the salvation offered to Israel.

True or False: Jesus was a Jew.

True or False: The Gentiles who desire to be recipients of the salvation provided in Jesus must become Jews in order to be saved.

True or False: Gentiles who want to be more pleasing to God than other Gentile believers should try to learn about Judaism and practice Jewish customs.

Notes:

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 10:1-21 (NKJV)

Lesson 24

Romans 10:1-21 (NKJV)

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

⁵ For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." ⁶ But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down from above) ⁷ or, " 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"

¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" ¹⁷ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. ¹⁸ But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." ¹⁹ But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation."

²⁰ But Isaiah is very bold and says: "I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." ²¹ But to Israel he says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

Paul was very bold in his declaration of love for the Lord - and for his countrymen according to the flesh: Israel.

Earlier in this epistle he said, "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises." Romans 9:1-4 (NKJV)

Paul was passionate about his love for his people. He was also keenly aware of the fact that they had confidence in the Old Covenant Law and were content with their efforts to please God by keeping it. They believed that obedience to the Law would result in their salvation. However, their zeal (as strong as it may have been) and their ability to keep the Law was insufficient.

The Law was a tutor intended to bring them to an understanding: that their “works” were insufficient. *“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”* (vs. 3) Paul told the Galatians that, *“the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”* Galatians 3:24–25 (NKJV) The zeal and energy of the people of Israel was insufficient in and of itself, but even still it was also *“not according to knowledge.”* (vs. 2) They were attempting to please God apart from faith in their Messiah.

Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, was the only one who could – and did – actually keep the Law and thus brought it to fulfillment. This is why Paul said, *“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”* (vs. 4) Once Jesus came and fulfilled the Law, the Law itself no longer needed the required tutor for those who would simply trust Christ Jesus for salvation.

As we know, the Law had a function in bringing men the knowledge of sin. However, once men and women come to know that they are sinners, and then turn to Jesus for the salvation He provides, by grace through faith alone, they may move on to perfection in Him. Therefore, *“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”* (vs. 4) If the Jews knew this, they would be relieved of their human effort and “zeal”, and would be free to worship God as those who are righteous – not because of their human performance and/or obedience to the Law – but through faith in Jesus – and in His finished work. This is what we mean when we say that the Gospel is “Good News.” It is “Good News” to know that we are accepted in Jesus Christ, and have been made the righteousness of God in Him – apart from works.

Paul shows us that there is no glory in our performance; but there is glory in our confidence in Jesus. He said, *“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”* Romans 3:27–28 (NKJV)

The Gospel tells us *“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’”* (vss. 9–11) If the Jews (just like you and me) trust Christ for salvation – in sincerity of heart – and confess Jesus as enough, they will be saved.

It should be noted that Paul’s exhortation to *“confess with your mouth”* is not to be understood as a ritual or mantra, but is intended as a statement of profession. *“We believe therefore we speak.”*

He told the Corinthians, *“And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’ we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.”* 2 Corinthians 4:13–14 (NKJV) The profession was a declaration of faith.

Were we to suggest (or believe) that simply speaking the words in ritual or mantra was Paul’s intended understanding of the expression, the mute would be incapable of obtaining salvation. Furthermore, were we required to “say the words” in order to be saved, human performance (as

simple as this might seem) would be required for salvation; and that would be the equivalent of communicating (or believing in) a gospel of faith plus works.

Salvation is by grace alone, by faith alone, in Christ alone – not of works.” (See Ephesians 2:8-9) Therefore, Paul can emphasize the fact that, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” (vs. 11)

God has chosen to communicate the Gospel through believers. For this reason Paul quotes Isaiah and says, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” (vs. 15) (See Isaiah 52:7)

The recipients of the Gospel are those of Israel and of all the nations. Those who have trusted Christ for salvation, from among the Gentile peoples, have become those whom God says He would use to “*provoke you to jealousy [the unbelieving Jews].*” (vs. 19) This was not an afterthought but was all part of the foreknown plan of God. Paul points this out when he quotes Isaiah. “*But Isaiah is very bold and says: ‘I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.’ But to Israel he says: ‘All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.’*” (vss. 20-21) This contrary posture and disobedience describes the present state of a great majority of the Israeli people today.

When Paul said, “*Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved,*” (vs. 1) he shows us that his desire is for the salvation of the Jews. In addition, here in this chapter he makes a solid case for the fact that God’s desire is the same. God is at work saving people all over the world. However, He is not finished with “*Israel, [and] He says, ‘All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.’*”

In the next chapter we will learn that God has not forsaken Israel. He has a plan for them and will bring it to fruition.

Word Wise:

Epistle: A letter; written communication.

Mantra: A statement or slogan repeated in order to bring about an end result.

True or False: Paul believed that God was finished with Israel and that He has replaced them with the Church.

True or False: Paul desired to see Israel saved and so does the Lord.

True or False: The Jews believed that they would be considered righteous if they kept the Law.

True or False: As believers we should still strive to keep the Law to show God that we will “meet Him half way.” In this way we are showing him that we are trying, and therefore He will save us.

True or False: God uses people to communicate the Good News.

True or False: God can use me to communicate the Good News.

True or False: I should communicate the Good News.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 11:1-36 (NKJV)

Lesson 25

Romans 11:1-36 (NKJV)

I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ “LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life”? ⁴ But what does the divine response say to him? “I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” ⁵ Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. ⁶ And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

⁷ What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. ⁸ Just as it is written:

“God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.”

⁹ And David says:

“Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them.” ¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.”

¹¹ I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. ¹² Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!

¹³ For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?

¹⁶ For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷ And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, ¹⁸ do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

¹⁹ You will say then, “Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.” ²⁰ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. ²² Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. ²³ And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

²⁵ For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

²⁷ *“The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”*

²⁸ Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, ³¹ even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. ³² For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.

³³ *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*

³⁴ *“For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?”*

³⁵ *“Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?”*

³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

At this point in the letter Paul redirects from the Jewish audience to the Gentiles. His purpose was to highlight the fact that the Gentiles have become recipients of the many blessings and promises given earlier to the Jewish people alone – by covenant.

Although the Gentiles will now be allowed access to the promises and blessings, Paul shows the Gentiles that God has not forsaken Israel and that the blessings the Gentiles may now enjoy should be embraced and appreciated with humility. Furthermore, it seems there was a potential boasting against Israel by the Gentile believers and a temptation to believe that God had replaced Israel with the Gentile Church. This is not the case! Although God has allowed for the Gentiles to become participants, He has not forsaken Israel, and therefore they will see all He has promised them come to fruition.

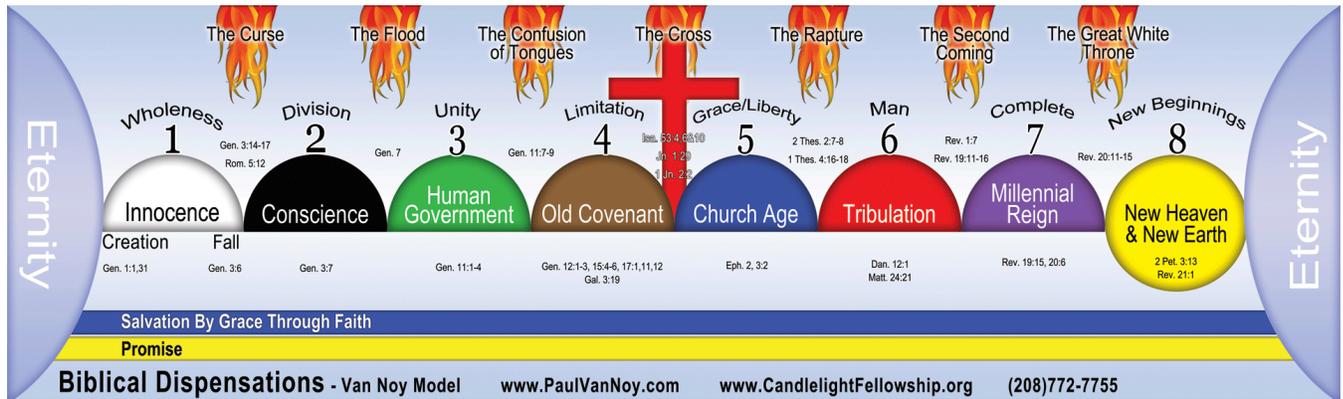
Paul begins his argument by showing that he himself is an Israeli and has come to know the salvation promised. He said, *“For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.”* (vs. 1) He shows that not only is he an Israeli believer in Messiah but that there are many Israeli people who believe too. Paul refers to these Jewish believers as the remnant. Thus he said, *“Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”* (vs. 5) (Note: earlier in this study we developed teachings on grace and election.)

Even though the great majority of Israeli people have rejected their Messiah, Paul knows that there is an elect number who will be saved during the Church Age, and that God has saved them by grace alone. He says that their salvation (just like ours) is not of works but is by grace. *“And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.”* (vs. 6)

The blindness experienced by a great majority of the Israeli people is the result of both past and present rebellion. Under the law there were consequences for willful disobedience, and one such consequence was that *“God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day,”* (vs. 8) and that as David said, *“Let their table become a*

snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a recompense to them. Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, and bow down their back always.” (vss. 9-10) Therefore, we can see that the earlier rebellion had consequences - as does the present. However, this does not in any way suggest that God has cast away His people Israel. To date we see the regathering of the nation. When Jesus returns He will spiritually awaken them to who He is, and will then bring to fruition all He promised them.

When Paul wrote to the Romans, he wrote to a people who were in the first century of the Church Age. The Church Age is, in a sense, an interruption in the Jewish time line. This we clearly see when examining the dispensational model below.



When the Church Age comes to a close, at the time of the Rapture, the Tribulation will follow. The Tribulation is a dispensation of discipline meted out to Israel – and the Christ-rejecting Gentile population of the earth. When Jesus returns at the Second Coming, He will come to deliver the living remnant of Israel and will establish His earthly Kingdom. This period of time is known as the Millennial Reign or The Kingdom Age.

Knowing that God had a plan for Israel, has a plan for them now, and maintains a plan for their future, gives us hope. God gave Israel many great and precious promises. If He failed to keep His promises to them, we would have no reason to believe His word, and as a result would have no reason to trust that He will keep His promises to us. However, we have great confidence in Him because He is not finished working with Israel. He will fulfill all He promised them. Paul knows this and therefore declares, *“I say then, have they (the Jews) stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not!”* (vs. 11a) God has not cast away His people Israel, and He will not cast us away either.

At the present time (The Church Age) God is using the Gentile believers to *“provoke [Israel] to jealousy.”* (vs.11a) He has been using the Church Age, and His calling to the Gentiles, as a means of provoking Israel to consider His mercies and the grace still available to them. When the Church Age has come to its close, and when the Lord has finished his disciplinary dealings with Israel, He will restore to its fullness the promises and blessings the Jewish people have long awaited.

Paul tells the Romans that this present age is glorious for the Church, but also points out that in the day God brings to fruition all He promised Israel, it will be greater than we might imagine. *“Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!”* (vs. 12) *“For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”* (vs. 15)

Israel – The Firstfruits and Olive Tree

In the Old Covenant, Israel was a kind of firstfruits to the Lord. (See Jeremiah 2:3) The firstfruits were the first portion of a whole that belonged to the Lord. This was pictured in the Law of Firstfruits and was practiced by the people of Israel. By giving of the firstfruits to the Lord, the people of Israel (through symbolism) recognized that the whole belonged to the Lord. Specifically this was practiced during harvest time in Israel. Therefore, in this way, Paul illustrates that Israel was the firstfruits to the Lord and says that the whole (harvest) is holy to the Lord. Following the same theme, but using another example, Paul illustrates by using the analogy of an olive tree.

The purpose of the illustration was to show the Gentiles that Israel is the firstfruits of a worldwide harvest God will gather in for Himself, and that although the Gentiles are given access to the Lord through the present unbelief of Israel, the Gentiles have not been given this privilege by inheritance or right but through the mercy of God. He says, *“if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you,”* (vss. 16-18) and then goes on to say, *“You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.’ Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith.”* (vss. 19-20a)

Unbelief and rebellion was the cause of loss the people of Israel suffered. In the same way Gentiles can (and do) suffer loss – the loss of salvation through unbelief. Therefore, rather than take for granted this gracious privilege, and refuse the offer God gives, Paul tells the Gentile people that they should humbly accept the offer God has given them. He says, *“Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.”* (vss. 20b-21) We are not entitled to salvation! Furthermore, as mentioned above, boasting against Israel and suggesting they have been utterly rejected by God is a foolishness He disdains. Israel is the Lord’s, and He is jealous for them. Jesus our Lord is the Savior of Israel – the Jewish Messiah. For this reason Jesus Himself declared that *“salvation is of the Jews.”* (See John 4:22) Therefore, *“Do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.”* (vs. 18)

“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.” (vs. 22) The Israelites who refused to believe were cut off. Gentiles who refuse to believe will be cut off too.

Many Gentiles from the Church Age will be *“cut off”* because they refuse to believe. The unbelieving Gentiles who are alive at the end of the Church Age will be *“cut off”* and enter the Tribulation period. There they will suffer along with unbelieving Israel. (See 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will return to rescue the living remnant of Israel. The great majority of those Jews will be illuminated by the Lord, believe, and be saved. (See Zechariah 12 -14) Paul develops this thought when he says, *“And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part*

has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'" (vss. 23-27) (See also Jeremiah 31:31-34)

When Paul says "all Israel", he is clearly referring to "the Israel of God." This refers to the believing. (See Romans 9:6) We cannot assume that "all" Israeli people will be saved because not all of Israeli people believe. Therefore, in this case Paul is referring to the "Israel of God" alive at the time of the Second Coming. (See Ezekiel 20:33-38)

When Paul mentions "the fullness of the Gentiles", he is indicating that God has, in His great foreknowledge, a specific number of Gentiles that He knows will be saved. This number apparently comes to its fullness just prior to the Second Coming. However, this does not suggest that other Gentiles will be disallowed faith and salvation during the Millennium. (A discussion on the Millennium will not be included herein.)

Paul knows that the Gentiles were shown disdain by the Jewish people and that the Jews who are unbelievers persecute these Gentiles believers. Even the believing Jewish people had to grow and come to understand that God was allowing Gentiles access to God by faith alone in Christ alone. This fact is communicated thoroughly in the Book of Acts. These Jewish people – who did not trust Jesus as Messiah – had demonstrated that they saw the Gentiles as enemies of their Jewish faith and heritage. However, Paul points out that God's gifting and callings are irrevocable and once again reinforces the overall picture of God's dealings with both the Jews and the Gentiles. He said, *"Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience, even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy. For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all."* (vss. 28-32)

The wisdom of God is amazing and at times difficult for the human mind to comprehend. Even Paul was overwhelmed with these truths and exclaimed, *"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"* (vs. 33), and then loosely quotes from both Job and Isaiah when he says, *"For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?"* (vss. 34-35), and concludes with, *"For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."* (vs. 36)

All the glory and honor for our salvation – and for the salvation of the Jews – is for and to the Lord! Blessed be the name of the Lord!

True or False: Gentile believers should be aware of the fact that they are not entitled to salvation.

True or False: Gentile believers should be humble and loving toward the Jewish people.

True or False: God is jealous for Israel.

True or False: God will ultimately fulfill all His promises to Israel.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 12:1-21 (NKJV)

Lesson 26

Romans 12:1–21 (NKJV)

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. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

³ *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

⁹ *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*

¹⁴ *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.*

¹⁷ *Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.*

²⁰ *Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”*

²¹ *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Here in Chapter 12 Paul makes an appeal to Godly living. His first appeal will be to physical worship (surrender), and then will move to the worship of God with the mind.

Worship is the act of surrender. Therefore, as believers we are called to live before the Lord in surrender to His will in our natural and physical lives and to have a mind that is given to biblical thinking. Paul shows that having a renewed mind – by the word of God – is the way the believer will move from worldly mindedness to a Biblical worldview. For many believers this is a real challenge.

We as believers live in a fallen world and are constantly bombarded with worldly thinking. Therefore, as believers we need to be constant in Bible study, in reading of the Scriptures, and in prayerful meditation on the truths of God’s word. As we grow in the word – by the grace of God – we will experience the renewal of the mind.

The mind is a spiritual component of our person and should be distinguished from the brain. The mind is informational and may be likened to the software in a computer. The brain would be like hardware. Therefore, we as believers need the reprogramming of our minds in order to see the behavioral changes necessary to *“present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service.”* (vs. 1)

Man is a tri-part being made up of body, mind (soul), and spirit. Our temporal bodies will fade, decay, and die. However, as believers, we anticipate the day of resurrection wherein we receive a glorified body – like Jesus’ after His physical resurrection. The soul (mind) is renewed by the word of God as we submit to and agree with the Scriptures, and by solid biblical counsel. The Spirit of man is renewed at the point of salvation by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is a once for all act of God.

The spiritual is the real you. The soul, as stated above, is informational and in many ways dictates will and emotion. The body is the shell in which the real you lives. It is said that the real you is the “ghost” that operates the machine.

We as believers are driven to live righteously – from within – by the effects of the Spirit of God Who dwells within us. As believers we will grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and will therefore be renewed in the informational systems of the mind. This renewal changes the way we view truth, error, right, and wrong, and therefore moves the believer away from the propensities of the flesh and toward that form of surrender Paul calls worship.

A key component of a life of worship is humility. Paul shows that all human beings are equally needy and have nothing to boast before the Lord. *“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”* (vs. 3)

As recipients of grace, and gifted with faith, God calls us to humble service in ministry. In verses 4-8 Paul lists some of the giftings God has given members of the Church and encourages maximum use of these gifts for the benefit of the body. He identifies prophecy, teaching, ministry, exhortation, giving, leadership, and mercy. Each of these gifts has specific uses in the Church.

Prophecy is foretelling and/or forth-telling of the word of God. Since we have the Bible and are aware of the fact that God has given us a complete timeline of His dealings with man, we understand that there are no new revelations of things to come, and therefore we leave the foretelling of things to come to forth-telling of these things.

Ministry is service. The forms of ministry may be diverse, but all ministry is designed to bring blessing and edification to others – and to the Lord. Every one of us is called to be a servant. Therefore, in all we do, we are called to give attention to service rather than to being served.

Teaching is a form of ministry wherein the one as teacher is serving others in the truth of God’s word. Teaching requires that the teacher is both student and instructor. No one will ever be a good teacher who is not a good student. Therefore, we diligently study to rightly divide the word of truth. Teachers represent the Lord and His word.

Exhortation is a call to action. Those with the gift of exhortation call others to act on what they know.

Giving is the gift of helping others with necessary supply. All believers are called to give. However, some in the body have a special gift of giving, and are motivated to help ministries and individual persons to have all they need in physical supply.

Leadership is providing others organizational motivation and rule. Leaders assist the Church in good discipline and direction. Leaders fundamentally lead by example, but are those in the body of Christ who are gifted with natural command. Most leaders are discovered because they tend to have a natural following and organically help others organize and accomplish various ministry goals.

Mercy is showing kindness and concern for those in need. It has also been said that mercy is withholding punishment or consequence from the deserving, and that grace is the granting of blessing to the undeserving. Believers who have received mercy are called to freely give the same.

These gifts (and more) are placed within individual members of the Church for the benefit of all. All believers are given gifts – without exception. All believers are also called to exercise their gifts faithfully, liberally, diligently and cheerfully. As believers, all we do is ministry to the Lord – and to the Lord’s people. Therefore, with joy we serve!

In verses 9-16 Paul gives practical instruction about how to exercise humility as we serve. Believers cannot and will not be capable of “doing” the work of ministry in their own strength, but are equipped by the grace of God. All the good we do is accomplished by the power of God within us only as we surrender to Him and allow His Spirit to use us. As we humbly serve the Church, Christians will be strengthened and grow into maturity.

Finally, Paul recognizes that there are some people in the world – and even in the Church – who are difficult to serve, and at times difficult to love. Therefore, he reminds the believer to serve as unto the Lord and then to give Him His rightful place in dealing with the unreceptive and unrepentant. By doing this we keep our eyes on the Lord and will be less likely to grow discouraged. We are called to love and allow the Lord to handle the results. Verse 21 sums this up by saying, “*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*” This is the biblical way of saying, “It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.”

True or False: Worship is singing.

True or False: Worship is surrender.

True or False: I am a worshipper.

True or False: I know that in my own strength I will never be pleasing to the Lord.

True or False: If I am led by the Lord, people will always appreciate the things I do to serve.

True or False: I need mercy and grace and also desire to be a person who gives what I have received.

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 13:1-14 (NKJV)

Lesson 27

Romans 13:1–14 (NKJV)

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. ⁷ Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

⁸ Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

¹¹ And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Civil law provides stability and order to an otherwise chaotic world. When men do what is right in their own eyes, without regard to the laws of God or the laws of the land, there is inevitably going to be a breakdown.

God requires things to be done in a structured and disciplined manner, and He calls us to abide by the standards He has established in His word. When men or nations disregard God's laws, there is spiritual, social, and economic disaster.

Some will argue that the above paragraph suggests a Theocratic form of government – and they would be right; it does! God is creator; and His creations, God intends to rule.

In the future God will rule not only the nation of Israel but all the nations of the world. However, at the present time, God has provided government and authority for the purposes of keeping order in this world. This is also true in the Church.

Rome exercised governmental rule throughout the Roman Empire. Paul understood this and even as much as the Roman government was corrupt and evil, God called upon the citizens living within

the Roman Empire to submit to government and the governing authorities. The same is true for Americans today. We have governmental rule and persons in authority here in this land.

In the U.S. we have been given the unique privilege of a governmental structure that was based upon the Judeo-Christian worldview and value system. However, we have seen a breakdown in the holy standards and principles that make for a great nation. We, as a nation, have been systematically abandoning God and His authority, and have replaced Him with evolutionary theory, self, and immoral living. (If man is simply a cosmic accident with no purpose, then living for pleasure without accountability would naturally be the logical end. However, we are not an accident; we have been created with purpose, and there is accountability – to God.)

Paul tells the Romans, *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.”* (vs. 1) Paul wants the believer to know that government is Biblical, and that it is God who has established societal order. He intends to have us “follow the rules” for the benefit of all.

When Paul says, *“the authorities that exist are appointed by God,”* He is not suggesting that all “persons” in authority are “appointed” by God, but that authority, position, hierarchy, rule, chain of command, etc. is. Some suggest that God, in His sovereignty, puts men in the place of authority for His purposes and plans – and I would agree! God is sovereign and can do as He sees fit. However, we cannot place blame on God for the actions or reactions of sinful and evil rulers. In fact, we as Americans need to take responsibility for the appointment of persons to places of authority – based upon our form of election and appointment. To blame the Lord for bad leadership is to dishonor Him and to refuse responsibility for our choices. To suggest that we are not participants in the political and authoritative process, and that all appointments are “God's sovereign choice,” will surely lead believers to a sense of futility in the political process. As a result, we as believers would tend toward fatalism, and would therefore retreat from our personal responsibility for the direction and health of the country. In fact, we are in the present condition as the result of earlier Christian failure to exercise our right to vote and/or to contend for righteousness in legislation.

Many Christians today suggest that we cannot legislate morality. They are wrong! We have and can create laws that establish a moral code and punish those who break those laws. For example, it is illegal to steal. If someone steals from another person, we have laws that will (or can) bring judgment against the thief – and punish them for the crime.

On the other hand, in America it is illegal to “murder.” However, because of our poor choices in voting and appointments to various legislative and political offices, today a mother and father can murder their unborn child. This is our fault. It is not the fault of God, and is not to be blamed upon His sovereign selection of a person or persons to authority.

We cannot legislate the morality of the heart. Only God can change the heart of man.

Paul understood that evil men were and will be in power throughout history. However, he nevertheless instructs believers to submit to the governing authorities – yes, even to those who are evil. The only exception to this rule is when rules or rulers seek to have us disobey God in order to obey them. If this be the case, civil disobedience is in order.

Civil disobedience occurred in Biblical times. In the book of Acts we read of Peter and John answering for their “civil disobedience” saying, “*whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge,*” (Acts 4:19 NKJV) and “*we ought to obey God rather than men.*” (Acts 5:29 NKJV) They made the open decision to obey the Lord when civil authorities demanded otherwise. We must do the same. However, lest we forget, please let me say again, our laws in America have been, for the most part, established and/or dismantled based upon our form of governing. Therefore, we need to take responsibility for the laws we have and the laws we maintain. If we are in any way required to disobey civil authorities in our land, we will also need to see that the cause was in the fact that we let slip away our freedoms once held. (I write these comments based upon our American governmental system – and although similar in nature, that rule would have been different in Rome. I only say this as a reminder that we must all take seriously our role in lawmaking and government. Americans are essentially self-governed under the authority of God, and we have responsibility and consequence based upon our involvement or inactivity.)

The principle of consequence in this text assumes the positive perspective. In other words, Paul makes the general principle known through the context of governance that is in accordance to the rule of God. Therefore Paul says, “*whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.*” Paul was suggesting that those who resist authority, or the agents of that authority, are rebelling against the standard of God. Furthermore, when Paul says “*For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil,*” (vs. 3a) he is following the same rule – suggesting that the “ruler” is doing what is just and good. Then Paul compounds the principle and adds, “*Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good.*” (vs. 3b-4a)

When Paul points out that those in authority have the power to exercise discipline or even corporal punishment, we can rest in the fact that the Bible endorses the governance. Paul said, “*But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.*” (vs. 4b)

Paul says that believers should be obedient to governing authorities not only because those leaders can bring discipline but also in order to have a clear conscience before both God and man. He also shows that taxation for the purpose of financial support of governmental officials is not only allowable, but right. The laborer is worthy of their hire. (See 1 Timothy 5:18) Therefore, to pay your taxes is biblical and to refrain from paying them is wrong. This is the context in which Paul says that we should “*owe no one anything except to love one another.*” (vs. 8) The application in its literal context relates to taxes, but the principle applies across the board. If you have a debt – pay it.

The expression “*owe no one anything*” does not suggest that it is wrong to borrow as some might contend. But if you do borrow, pay the loan back. Furthermore, be aware of the fact that Scripture declares that “*the rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.*” Proverbs 22:7 (NKJV) Therefore, I suggest that borrowing should only occur under the right circumstances and for the right reasons.

The debt we all owe is to love. We should all love one another fervently and with a pure heart, for “*love is the fulfillment of the law.*” (vs. 10)

Finally, Paul calls believers to Godly behavior. At the highest level – to love, and then to righteous living, especially considering the times. We are called to preparedness for the coming of the Lord.

As believers we are equipped by the indwelling Spirit of God and through the power of His grace to live righteously in the present age. Let us *“therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”* (vs. 12b)

True or False: All leaders are appointed by God.

True or False: Ungodly leaders are allowed to rule – by God, but are not always His first pick!

True or False: I should obey the governing authorities unless they require me to disobey the Lord.

True or False: The Roman government was led by Godly men.

True or False: As a Christian I am responsible to participate in the government of this country.

True or False: I am called to love.

True or False: Love can be demonstrated by the way I serve.

True or False: Jesus is coming soon, and I should live life as though He is coming today.

True or False: It is best not to have financial debts.

True or False: Abortion is murder, and it should be illegal.

True or False: Just because something is legal does not mean that it is lawful.

Notes:

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 14:1-23 (NKJV)

Lesson 28

Romans 14 (NKJV)

1 Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. 2 For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it.

He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. 7 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. 9 For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living.

10 But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. 11 For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

14 I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. 15 Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. 16 Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; 17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.

19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. 20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. 21 It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

22 Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Paul the Apostle told Timothy, "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth." 1 Timothy 4:1-3 (NKJV)

We know that food and drink does not bring about righteousness and neither does it spiritually defile. However, as Paul points out here in Romans 14, there are those who are *“weak in the faith”* and are unaware of this fact.

God desires that we who are mature in the things of God should show patience toward those who are less mature. We are not to condemn others who are without understanding; and the *“weak in the faith”* should likewise refrain from casting judgment upon those who are mature.

As stated in 1 Timothy (above), Paul does communicate that the doctrines associated with this kind of legalism are inspired by the Devil. He boldly says so! However, because the eating of certain foods or the drinking of wine does not add to or take away from the salvation we have been given in Christ, he tells us that we should be patient with one another in this regard, allowing the Lord to grow to maturity His own. Albeit, this fact does not suggest that we refrain from telling the truth – we are simply told not to make these things a point of division.

In verses 5 and 6 Paul also addressed the fact that many get caught up in setting aside a particular day for worship. He says, *“One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it.”* Herein he makes clear that Sabbath keeping is neither essential nor does it add to or take away from the salvation provided us in Jesus. He told the Colossian believers, *“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths.”* Colossians 2:16 (NKJV) He therefore makes clear that the dietary and legalistic positions taken by certain Christian groups or persons in these areas are non-salvific.

When Paul says, *“we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ,”* (vs. 10b) he is showing us that these practices will be sorted out when we see the Lord and are, therefore, not worth fighting about and dividing over. The supreme manifestation of our faith is love for one another. Arguments over such matters are unfruitful.

Paul knows that there is a day coming when all these errors in doctrine will be rectified. To the Corinthians he said, *“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”* 1 Corinthians 13:12 (NKJV) When we see Jesus face to face, we will have immediate revelation of those things that are true and false. All the errors will be immediately seen in the light of His glory and will simply be washed away.

The fact that these matters of conscience are secondary to salvation (non-salvific) does not indicate that they are insignificant – they are. We are called to maturity in the truth and should not think these things unworthy of study and discussion. Paul simply does not want believers to fight about and divide over things like food, drink, days of the week, etc. *“for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”* (vs. 17) He wants us to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, and at the same time grow in love for one another. *“Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way. (vs. 13)*

There are many people who have become a stumbling block to others in the faith. For example, they who believe it is a sin to eat certain foods – and see you do so – may be grieved and stumbled. Therefore Paul goes as far as to say, *“It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. (vs. 21)* However, he is clearly not suggesting that this is the rule in our personal lives, and therefore says, *“Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.”* (vs. 22) In other words, if eating pork (for example) causes your brother to stumble, don’t eat pork in the presence of a weaker

brother or sister. Why cause them discouragement and grief? Just eat your pork at home or wherever you may be where a brother or sister will be unaffected. *“For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men.”* (vs. 18) *“Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.”* (vs. 15b) *“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense.”* (vss. 19-20)

To destroy another in this context does not and cannot refer to costing another believer their salvation. Our behavior as believers in Christ cannot cost another believer their salvation. However, our liberty in Christ may cause another believer to stumble whether in conscience by feeling a sense of condemnation and, thus, destroying their peace in the Lord, or by causing the one stumbled to return to a pattern of life that has destructive results.

For example, if a brother or sister struggles with alcohol and those who are able to (as mature Christians) partake of wine, etc. cause the one avoiding such drink to return to alcohol abuse, we are not walking in love nor helping our weaker brother or sister to remain free from a destructive behavior – even if it is known by the mature believer that drinking wine is not sin. *“To the pure all things are pure”* Titus 1:15a (NKJV) *“Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.”* (vs. 22b)

However, if a brother or sister does not believe that he or she is free to eat or drink etc., that person will suffer (self) condemnation: *“he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.”* (vs. 23) They do not suffer condemnation from God, but from their own conscience. Therefore, for that believer they are committing an act of sin – *“for whatever is not from faith is sin.”* (vs. 23)

Read:

Colossians 2

1 Corinthians 8

Word Wise:

Salvific: Having the power to save, redemptive, providing salvation, sanctification, or justification.

Questions:

True or False: Eating meat is a sin.

True or False: Drinking wine is a sin.

True or False: For some people, what we eat and drink can be an issue. It is better not to quarrel about it since there is a day coming when we will see the Lord and all the issues will be sorted out and made clear.

True or False: God is not concerned about making one day more important than another.

True or False: I should worship the Lord every day.

True or False: If a weaker brother or sister eats pork but believes it is a sin to do so, they will go to hell.

True or False: Love can be demonstrated by the way I serve.

True or False: I am called to be others centered.

True or False: Matters of conscience are secondary to salvation (non-salvific).

True or False: We are called to maturity in the truth.

True or False: We should pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

True or False: We don't need to care about things that are non-salvation issues.

True or False: We are called to study the Scripture and mature in the truth of God's Word.

Notes:

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 15:1-33 (NKJV)

Lesson 29

Romans 15 (NKJV)

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." 4 For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. 5 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, 6 that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

7 Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God. 8 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, 9 and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name." 10 And again he says: "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!" 11 And again: "Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!" 12 And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope." 13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. 15 Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, 16 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 17 Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. 18 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—19 in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation, 21 but as it is written: "To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand."

22 For this reason I also have been much hindered from coming to you. 23 But now no longer having a place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come to you, 24 whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. 25 But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. 26 For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. 27 It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to

minister to them in material things. 28 Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. 29 But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.

30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, 31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. 33 Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

As a continuation of the thoughts in Chapter 14 Paul says, “*We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*” (vs. 1) His discussions were on non-salvific matters of conscience: eating certain foods, drinking wine, Sabbath keeping, etc. Paul knows that the strong in faith are able to enjoy all things God created – with thanksgiving. (See 1 Timothy 4:1-5) However, we who are strong ought to be patient with those who don’t. He went as far as to say that those who are stumbled by the stronger in faith will suffer greatly if “*we who are strong*” do not exercise our freedom and the liberty we have in Christ with love and wisdom. He desires “*that... with one mind and one mouth [we may] glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Furthermore, he wants us to “*receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.*” (vs. 7) We are called to love and embrace our brothers and sisters in Christ in spite of our non-salvific differences.

Paul illustrates our need to accept and embrace one another by referencing how Jews and Gentiles were both embraced by the Lord Jesus Christ. He says that we should receive one another, “*just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.*” (vs. 7) and adds, “*Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy...*” (vs. 8-9a)

Please notice that when Paul says ‘*I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God,*’ that the “*circumcision*” and the “*fathers*” refer to the Jewish people and that the Gentiles are brought into fellowship with God (and into fellowship with the “*circumcision*”) through our Lord Jesus Christ. He made into one both Jew and Gentile in Christ. Paul reinforces this when he cites a variety of verses from the Old Testament concerning praise to God for His marvelous work. He quotes, “*As it is written: ‘For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name,’*” (vs. 9b) and then adds, “*And again he says: ‘Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!’ And again: ‘Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!’ And again, Isaiah says: ‘There shall be a root of Jesse; and He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in Him the Gentiles shall hope.’”* (vss. 10-12) The root of Jesse is Jesus! We as Gentiles have our hope in the Lord – just as the believing Jews. Praise the Lord. This is good reason for Paul to say, “*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*” (vs. 13)

When Paul refers to the “*things [that] were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope,*” (vs. 4) he is referencing the Old Testament writings. However, now that we have the New Testament we may suggest the same of all the Scriptures – both Old and New Testaments. We are called to study and learn the word of God knowing that the knowledge of God and of His word will provide us hope.

In the concluding remarks Paul makes things more personal and celebrates his ministry among the Gentiles. He also explains that he would have liked to come to Italy and visit the saints there in Rome but was hindered.

As much as Paul is passionate about his people Israel, He rejoices about how God has called him and used him to minister to the Gentile people. He writes, *“Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the grace given to me by God, that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient— in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.”* (vss. 14-19)

Like many missionaries, Paul desired to go where others had not gone in preaching the Gospel. He said, *“And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation, but as it is written: ‘To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand.’ ”* (vss. 19-20) This fact was one of the reasons Paul was hindered from going to Rome to see the saints there. (vss. 22-23)

In addition to going to the unreached, Paul had a vision of getting to Jerusalem in order to minister to the needs of the persecuted and poor saints in Jerusalem. He desired to take them financial support as well as spiritual encouragement. He said, *“Whenever I journey to Spain, I shall come to you. For I hope to see you on my journey, and to be helped on my way there by you, if first I may enjoy your company for a while. But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things. Therefore, when I have performed this and have sealed to them this fruit, I shall go by way of you to Spain. But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”* (vss. 24-29)

Finally Paul asked for the prayer support of the saints in Rome. *“Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.”* (vss. 30-33) Paul knew that the prayers of the saints are cherished by the Lord and that our God answers prayer. It has been said that, *“Prayer is striking the winning blow – but service is gathering up the results.”* Albeit, prayer is not powerful as some suggest – God is powerful and answers prayer. *“For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers...”* 1 Peter 3:12a (NKJV)

Questions:

True or False: We who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

True or False: The Scriptures are like many other books. It is good to read them but other books can be just as important.

True or False: In Christ both Jew and Gentile are brought together as one body.

True or False: Paul was delayed in his desire to go to Rome (in part) because he was busy with other missionary efforts.

True or False: During the first century, the Jewish believers in Jerusalem were being persecuted.

True or False: In Jerusalem and all over Israel, those who believe in Jesus as Messiah are still being persecuted – even to this day.

True or False: Believers in Jesus from all over the world should pray for the saints in Jerusalem. Moreover, we should all pray for the persecuted Church wherever they are.

True or False: Paul believed that those who are benefited by the Gospel should pray for and care for other members in the Body of Christ.

True or False: Prayer is powerful.

True or False: God is powerful and He answers prayer.

True or False: I desire to be a person of prayer and to grow in my trust in the Lord.

Notes:

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ladies Bible Study
Romans 16:1-27 (NKJV)

Lesson 30

Romans 16 (NKJV)

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, 2 that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. 5 Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epænetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ. 6 Greet Mary, who labored much for us. 7 Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. 8 Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. 9 Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys, my beloved. 10 Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those who are of the household of Aristobulus. 11 Greet Herodion, my countryman. Greet those who are of the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord. 12 Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, who have labored in the Lord. Greet the beloved Persis, who labored much in the Lord. 13 Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. 14 Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren who are with them. 15 Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. 16 Greet one another with a holy kiss. The churches of Christ greet you.

17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple. 19 For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. 20 And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.

21 Timothy, my fellow worker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my countrymen, greet you. 22 I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, greet you in the Lord. 23 Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother. 24 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

25 Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began 26 but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.”

One of the great marks of Paul the Apostle was his care and concern for people. It is true that Paul concerned himself with his mission and calling but never allowed himself to be unconcerned about individual people. The persons he identifies as problems to the ministry he has mentioned both here in Romans and also in some of his other letters. However, that is not reason to believe that he did not care for even those who were disobedient and a hindrance to the work of ministry. He did! Some people need to be marked as divisive and problematic so that the Body of Christ is protected. Therefore, even in Christian ministry at times division is unavoidable.

Paul's concern for sound doctrine, and his love for the body, compelled him to tell the church in Rome (and all of us) that Church discipline is essential. Some people will bring error and division into the Church. They are to be identified as false teachers. Others will come in seeking their own gain and personal interests. They too must be avoided. Peter mentioned this problem as well. He said, *"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber."* 2 Peter 2:1–3 (NKJV)

In this chapter Paul mentions many useful people by name and among the many are a good number of women. Paul, (who has often been accused of being sexist) was very aware of the valuable investment both men and women make in the Gospel ministry.

Paul suggests that his sister in the Lord (whom he was sending to them) be greeted with warmth, care, and respect. Then he asks that the many people he has enjoyed meeting be greeted. Many of them he lists by name.

Following his greeting to those in Rome he send greeting to them from those who were with him. This fact makes the Book of Romans not only a powerful declaration of the Gospel – to the Jew and to the Gentile – but also makes it one of the most personal and intimate letters in the collection of Paul's writings. One cannot fail to see how Paul and the others in the Church loved each other.

His final comments are so exhilarating and passionate. My heart rejoices as I read these words and as I reference them to you as we conclude our study of this glorious work.

"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith—to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen." (vss. 25-27)

"...I am glad on your behalf;.. I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. (vss. 19b-20)

Questions:

True or False: Paul personally loved those he served and those with whom he served.

True or False: People are important to God.

True or False: Those who are a distraction or destructive to the work of the ministry should be marked – but not hated.

True or False: In the world we will have tribulation and difficulties.

True or False: The God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet!

True or False: The Gospel (once a mystery to the Old Testament saints) has been clearly made manifest in the Church Age to the Jews and to the Gentiles.

True or False: All glory and honor belong to the Lord.

True or False: I have grown as the result of this study.

True or False: I can and will use what I have learned to serve others.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.” (vs. 20)

Notes: