

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Studies in Paul's Epistle to the Romans

outlines by David McClister

Why Do We Need the Gospel?

Romans 1:18 - 3:20

- I. A brief look at Rom 1:13-17.
 - A. Paul was eager to preach the gospel everywhere, but especially in "virgin territory" (cf. Rom 15:20; 1 Cor 3:9f; 2 Cor 10:16).
 1. Why? The answer is simple: because all have sinned (Rom 3:23), and all need to be saved from the terrible consequences of sin. Sin is the universal problem, and this fact occupies a significant portion of Romans.
 2. The gospel is the answer/solution to the problem of sin. It is God's power to save (Rom 1:16-17), to undo what sin did.
 3. There is a lesson for us here: our zeal in preaching will be the product of our insight into the problem of sin and of our appreciation of the power of the gospel.
 - B. The fact that sin is the universal problem, however, was not as apparent to everyone else as it was to Paul.
 1. This is still a factor to consider in preaching the gospel today. Many people have a drastically diminished, or even nonexistent, sense of sin.
 - a. Our postmodern age denies the existence of moral absolutes; every man is a law unto himself in this way of thinking. There are no judgments, only opinions.
 - b. Karl Menninger decried the loss of a sense of guilt in our society in his 1973 book *Whatever Became of Sin?* Instead of sin and guilt we now have victimization and "disease" which obviates any personal responsibility for any wrongdoing one may imagine.

2. Thus Paul argues extensively in Rom 1:18 - 3:20 to show that all have sinned.
3. The preaching of the gospel begins with preaching the problem of sin. Unless there is a conviction concerning sin, a person will not see his need for the gospel.

II. The guilt of the Gentiles. Rom 1:18-32.

- A. Their guilt stems first from the fact that they knew some things. Guilt begins with knowledge.
 1. Rom 1:18-20 -- the knowledge of the Gentiles about God.
 - a. That the Gentiles knew that there was a God is a "given" in Paul's argument.
 - b. How did the Gentiles know things about God? Because God revealed something about Himself in nature; nature bears His signature, as it were. (v 19)
 - c. What did they know about God? 2 specific things:
 1. That God is a God of eternal power. Anyone who has contemplated God and the world can see that the world is the product of a powerful God.
 2. That God possesses a divine nature. That is, that God is not some super human (as the Greeks and Romans thought of their gods). God is deity, divine, not human (cf. Num 23:19).
 2. But Paul also says that in addition to knowing some things about God, the Gentiles also knew some things about right and wrong.
 - a. Rom 2:14-15 -- they had a "law written in their hearts." There is a certain innate moral sense in all people. We instinctively know that some things are wrong (incest, murder, stealing, etc.).
 - b. Rom 1:32 -- "they know the ordinance of God" innately.
- B. The sin of the Gentiles:
 1. They ignored what they knew about God. They suppressed the truth (Rom 1:18), they refused to recognize Him as they should have (v 21).
 1. Note v 22 -- men have a long history of turning their backs on God, claiming that they are smarter than to obey what God says. This attitude is still very much alive today. The irony is that man's quest for wisdom apart from God only makes him a fool (cf. 1 Cor 1:18 - 2:16).
 2. They did things they knew were wrong (Rom 1:32), and, moreover, encouraged others to do the same. This was clearly a willful rebellion on their part.
 3. Thus because they failed to act on what they knew, they were without excuse (Rom 1:20).
- C. The consequences: "God gave them over" to follow the path they had chosen. God let them walk down the path of willful ignorance, and it

produced the wickedness that characterized pagan society. See a shortened version of the same statement in Eph 4:17-19.

1. Because they refused to acknowledge God (Rom 1:28), because they chose instead to ignore what they knew by nature and follow that which they knew was a lie (v 25), they became:
 - . idolaters (v 23)
 - a. homosexuals (vv 24-25)
 - b. filled with all unrighteousness (vv 29-31)
2. The path of sin is the path of misery, and leads to eternal damnation. See Eph 2:1-3. Because of their sin, the Gentiles were in need of salvation.
3. Note the simple pattern: follow the truth → righteousness, follow a lie → wickedness. These are the only two options for anyone (cf. 2 Thes 2:9-12).
4. All of the things Paul mentions in Rom 1:23-32 are also true of our society today. As long as people refuse to acknowledge the truths that are naturally before them, this wickedness will persist. And, as with the pagans of Paul's day, there is no excuse for it.

III. The guilt of the Jews. Rom 2:1 - 3:20.

- A. The Jews would have agreed with Paul's criticism and condemnation of the Gentiles. They thought "the pagans are sinners, but we Jews are the people of God, and not like them" (see Gal 2:15).
 1. cf. Matt 3:9; John 8:39ff. This seems to have been a common attitude among Jews of Jesus' day: "since we are the children of Abraham, we are accepted before God." Of course, John, Jesus, and Paul all preached that this attitude was nothing but a false security.
 2. Paul goes on to demonstrate that the Jews were guilty *in the same way* as the Gentiles. That is, they too had refused to act on what they knew, and thus they too were guilty before God and had no excuse for it. Rom 2:1.
- B. The knowledge of the Jews: God gave them the Law (of Moses).
 1. In this the Jews even "boasted" (Rom 2:17). They saw it as a privilege, something that made them better than others.
 2. But the fact that they had an explicit Law from God makes them even more accountable, and it makes their guilt all the more inexcusable.
 - . They were unlike the Gentiles in that while the Gentiles had a law that was somewhat vague, the Jews had a Law that was very specific. Thus they knew right and wrong much more accurately than the Gentiles (Rom 2:20).
- C. The sin of the Jews: they refused to obey the Law God gave them.
 1. Rom 2:21-22 -- the Jews were just as guilty of sexual immorality and idolatry as the pagans were! (see Rom 1:23-25 above)

2. Note Rom 2:23f -- they dishonored God, the very thing that the Gentiles were guilty of (Rom 1:21; and the quotation from Isa 52:5 nails it down). That is, they were no better than the pagans.
 3. Thus the Jews were sinners too, and in need of salvation.
- D. But the Jews would object to Paul's charges on the grounds of circumcision. In the Jewish way of thinking, circumcision identified them as God's people. It was, in many ways, one of the most significant defining elements for the Jews (cf. Gal 5:2ff).
1. Thus in Rom 2:25-29 Paul shows that outward circumcision (of the flesh) means nothing if one does not obey God.
 - . In a statement full of irony, Paul says that it is possible for an uncircumcised person to act like a circumcised one, and vice versa. Rom 2:26-27.
 - a. The true significance of circumcision is pointed out in Rom 2:28-29: it is to be a symbol of the cutting off of unrighteousness from one's life. (cf. 1 Cor 7:19; Gal 5:6; 6:15; Phil 3:2f; Col 2:11).
- E. Does this mean there was no privilege associated with being one of God's people (the Jews)?
1. No, it just means that the Jews failed to live up to what God demanded of them. Rom 3:1-9a.
 - . Their sin sits in sharp contrast to the absolute righteousness of God. Rom 3:3-8.
 2. So all (Gentiles *and* Jews) are under sin, a fact to which the Scriptures testify (see the string of quotations in Rom 3:10-19).
 - . And lest the Jews read these verses as applying only to Gentiles (a technique we must avoid today), Paul says that they are verses from God's Law, and the Law spoke to the Jews. Rom 3:19.
 3. In Rom 3:20 Paul mentions another reason why the Jews need the gospel: because the Law of Moses was not the answer/solution to the problem of sin. The Law pointed out sin, but did not correct the problem.
- F. Application:
1. God's own people may certainly stand just as guilty as unbelievers before God if they fail to obey God. There is no partiality with God (Rom 2:6-11). We must avoid the false security that trapped the Jews. Just because we call ourselves by the right name and hold the truth in our hands does not mean we have an advantage over others. We too must obey God.

Justification By Faith

Romans 3:21 - 4:25

- I. All have sinned. So how can we escape from the problem of sin and its terrible consequences?
 - A. The answer: through the gospel.
 1. Salvation comes through the gospel (cf. Rom 1:16f), not through the Law of Moses. This was a point the Jews needed to understand. Salvation is "apart from the Law."
 2. The Law and the Prophets testified/pointed to the gospel, but they were not themselves God's means of attaining righteousness. cf. John 5:46; Luke 24:44; Acts 26:22.
 - B. Note on "the righteousness of God."
 1. The word "righteousness" is a legal term that denotes conformity to law. When a person's life is in conformity to the law, he is righteous. If he has broken the law, he is unrighteous.
 2. The "righteousness of God" is the righteousness that has its source in God, not in man. It is the righteousness determined or defined by God, not by man. In other words, is it what God accounts to be righteous.
 - . This is the crux of the matter. In a sense, it does not matter whether we have been determined to be righteous by men. It is *God's* approval that we need; without that, we are doomed.
 3. So how do I get God's approval? How do I attain to the righteousness of God? . . .
 - C. "through faith in Jesus Christ." Rom 3:22.
 1. "Faith" has many aspects: believing a particular thing, trusting obeying, etc.
 2. But the word is often used in a generic sense in the Bible to denote everything a person must do to be saved. In short, faith is responding positively to God (with everything included in that). cf. Eph 2:8; Acts 16:31; etc.
 3. Faith is that disposition, that decision, that attitude toward God in which we give ourselves to Him in every way; we entrust everything we are and have to Him, we follow His guidance and do what He says. It denotes complete commitment and dedication.
 4. The message of the gospel is that when we commit ourselves to Jesus, God accounts us to be righteous in His sight. Rom 3:22.
 - D. How does that work? Rom 3:24-26.
 1. Rom 3:24a -- *not* because we deserve it or earned it. Remember, we were all sinners, guilty, unrighteous before God. We become righteous before God as a *gift* of God's *grace* (kindness).

2. Rom 3:24b-25 -- how it is that we can be accounted righteous even though we were in fact unrighteous? Because Jesus *redeemed* us (Eph 1:7), He was the *propitiation* toward God for us. He died in our place, He took the punishment that was due to us, He suffered for us. cf. Isa 53; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 1:4; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18.
 - . God's basic law was that sin is punished by death. The sinner must die for his sin (cf. Ezek 18:4).
 - a. Jesus died for us; His death satisfied the requirement of God. By taking our place, we are spared from the death that is the consequence of sin.
 - b. This proves God to be just in that He did not allow sin to go unpunished. He punished it in Jesus. Rom 3:25-26.
 3. When we commit ourselves to Jesus we appropriate the benefits of what He did, and we are then justified (accounted to be righteous before God). We are justified not by what we did, but it is God's gift to us when we commit ourselves to Jesus.
 - . Thus there is no room for human boasting when it comes to salvation. Rom 3:27-28.
 4. And this justification through faith in Jesus is not for Jews only, but for Jews *and Gentiles*. Rom 3:29-30.
- II. Faith is God's "original" method of justification. Rom 4:1-25.
- A. The Jews would object to any notion of justification apart from the Law. They argued that only when one has obeyed the Law can he properly stand justified before God.
 1. So Paul takes the Jews back to their forefather, Abraham, to show that faith is God's original method of justification -- Abraham himself was justified in exactly this way.
 - . Remember, the Jews claimed a special allegiance to Abraham. By taking them to the case of Abraham Paul is presenting an irrefutable argument.
 - B. Abraham was a *believer* in God, a man of faith.
 1. Gen 15:6 (quoted in Rom 4:3) makes this clear.
 - . How did Abraham's righteousness get accounted to him? Through the Law? No -- the Law (of Moses) had not even been given yet.
 - a. God accounted Abraham righteous because Abraham believed (committed, trusted, dedicated himself to) God.
 - b. The words of David in Psa 31:1f (quoted in Rom 4:6-8) point in this same direction. David speaks of those who are guilty of sin, but God did not hold that sin against them. That is, they did not earn their justified status before God (for they had sinned), but they stood justified before God because God, as a gift, did not hold their sin against them.
 2. And Abraham was *uncircumcised* when God justified him. Thus justification by faith is for the uncircumcised (Gentiles) too. Rom 4:9-16.

- . vv 9-12 -- afterwards God gave him the sign of circumcision as "a seal of the righteousness of the faith he had while uncircumcised." Circumcision was the sign of the believer. In this way Abraham is the "forefather" of both Jews (the circumcised) and Gentiles (the uncircumcised).
- a. vv 13-17 -- more specifically, he is the *spiritual forefather of all believers* (Gal 3:7-9), including Gentiles (the word "nations" in Gen 17:5 [quoted in Rom 4:17] usually denotes Gentiles in the OT). God wants all to follow the lead of Abraham and believe in Him; everyone who believes like Abraham did is a spiritual child (descendant) of Abraham (v 16).
- b. The fact that God justifies on the basis of faith (i.e., that it is unearned by works) is what makes it a matter of grace. v 16.

C. What did Abraham believe specifically? Rom 4:17b-22.

1. Basically, Abraham believed in God's power to raise the dead.
 - . God is a God whose characteristic activity is bringing life to the dead, and bringing existence out of nonexistence (Rom 4:17).
 - a. Faith in the power of God is how the gospel works. cf. 1 Pet 3:21; Col 2:12. When we obey the gospel it is an act of faith on our part. The gospel is God's power to save, and when we obey it in faith that power accomplishes its work for us by bringing us out of the death of sin and into life with God. Eph 2:4-7.
2. God had promised that Abraham would be a father of many nations, but at the time Abraham was 75 years old and childless. By the time he turned 99 he was still childless!
3. So Abraham considered 3 things:
 - . His own body was as good as dead as far as producing children was concerned (Rom 4:19a).
 - a. Sarah's womb was dead (and had always been that way; Rom 4:19b)
 - b. But he believed that God was able (powerful) to bring life out of death. So when God told this old man with a barren wife that he would have many descendants, he believed that God could and would do it. Rom 4:20.
4. Because Abraham believed God, specifically that God would bring him many descendants as He promised, God accounted him righteous. Rom 4:21-22.

III. Application. Rom 4:23-25.

- A. God expects the very same thing from us that he got from Abraham: belief in His power to raise the dead.

1. Specifically, God wants us to believe in Him as the God who gives life to the dead, in this case to the dead Jesus (Rom 10:9; Rom 4:24).
 - . Paul will show later (in chapter 6) that in the gospel we unite ourselves with Jesus, with His death, burial, and resurrection.
 2. When we believe in God's power to raise the dead we believe like Abraham believed, and God justifies us as He did Abraham.
- B. Thus justification is wrapped up in Jesus, specifically in His death and resurrection:
1. He died for us (an act of grace, a gift)
 2. He was raised so that we might believe in God's power, in Him, as Abraham did.

The Blessings of Justification

Romans 5:1-21

- IV. The Blessings of Justification: Romans 5:1-11. In short, the blessings are two facets of one fact or truth: that we have an entirely new situation.
- A. We have a new present situation: peace with God to enjoy in this present life. vv 1-2a, 10a, 11.
1. Peace is the same thing as reconciliation in this context. It is the cessation of hostility between two enemies.
 - . Paul is not so much discussing the idea that we have peace as a personal possession, as in a sense or a feeling of peace (although that is another benefit discussed in another text, Phil 4:7), but that we are at peace with God.
 2. The wonderful news is that we who were enemies of God because of our sin are now reconciled to Him, v10a.
 - . Because Jesus paid the price for our sins, the thing that made us enemies against God (our sin) no longer exists.
 - a. Col 1:19-23
 - b. 2 Cor 5:18-21 -- this is what preaching the gospel is all about: preaching peace, preaching reconciliation with God.
 3. N.b. that it is peace "through our Lord Jesus Christ." It comes through Jesus or it does not come at all. Rom 5:11.
 - . cf. John 14:6

- a. Acts 10:36
 - b. In Eph 2:14ff Paul includes the reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles, together reconciled to God in one body through the cross of Jesus. The same gospel reconciles both to God and both to each other.
- B. We have a new future: an even greater life to come; we exult in the hope of glory. vv 2b-8.
 - 1. Because we have peace with God, we no longer face God's wrath.
 - . There was a time when the only thing in our future was the wrath of God. Eph 2:3. But the propitiation of Jesus' death abated that wrath.
 - 2. So now we have hope (1 Pet 1:3), whereas before we had none (Eph 2:12). cf. Titus 3:5-7.
 - 3. Hope, of course, has to do with what is not yet -- Rom 8:24f.
 - 4. But hope in the Bible is not simply wishing for things. Rather, hope in the Biblical sense denotes a confidence in what we do not yet have. Even though we do not have it yet, we look forward to it with all confidence and assurance.
 - . It has been defined as "desire + expectation."
 - a. Heb 6:19 -- like an anchor.
 - b. Our hope of life with God is what keeps us going. The stronger our hope, the stronger we are! cf. 1 Pet 1:13.
 - 5. It is a hope of the glory of God -- a hope that we will be share in His glory, that we will be glorified to be with Him. Eph 1:18.
 - . Think about it -- living in a glorified state, without any of the pains, sorrows, weaknesses, or hardships that are so characteristic of life in the flesh.
 - a. Rom 8:18; Col 3:4.
 - 6. It is a hope that not even the present hardships of life can diminish. In fact, those hardships serve to support and increase that hope! vv 3-4.
 - . cf. Jam 1:2-4. Paul takes this one step further here in Rom 5:2-4.
- V. But some may ask (openly or privately), how do I really know that I will get what I hope for from God? There are two proofs or guarantees of hope. vv 5-10.
 - A. The first is the love of God. vv 5-8.
 - 1. I know that God will give me what I hope for from Him, because His love for me does not waver. He loves me (and you) so much that He will not fail to give what is promised.
 - 2. God loves us so much that He gave the life of Jesus for us, in our place.
 - . John 3:16
 - a. John 15:13 and 1 John 3:16.
 - 3. But the full extent of the love of God is shown in Rom 5:6-8 -- Christ died for us not because we were righteous or good and

deserving of such a great gift. No, God sent Jesus to die when we were sinners, enemies. His love transcended any notion of what we deserve.

4. Rom 8:32.

B. What we have now is the proof and guarantee of what will come later. vv 9-10.

1. In each of these verses Paul employs a "much more" argument, an argument from the lesser to the greater. If the lesser is true, then the greater is, in a sense, even more true or sure.
2. Full and final salvation is yet to come -- Rom 8:24 "For in hope we have been saved" and 1 John 2:25 "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life."
3. The connection between now and later centers in the connection between the death and resurrection of Christ.
 - . Christ died and then was raised from the dead by the power of God.
 - a. Just as sure as His death was followed by His resurrection, so it is sure that our reconciliation will be followed by our glorification.
4. Similarly:
 - . Christ's death (blood) is what reconciled us.
 - a. And so Christ's resurrection is the guarantee that we will enter into glory. "We shall be saved by His life" (Rom 5:10). If we have known the one, we will know the other.

VI. Another way of explaining the blessings of justification is put forth in Rom 5:12-21. There has been a great reversal made possible in Christ.

A. Paul here sets Adam and Christ side by side in a contrast/comparison. Basically, what was done in Adam was undone in Christ.

1. Similarities between Adam and Christ:
 - . both are "one man"
 - a. each did "one" significant thing
 - b. what each one did effected many; the consequences "reigned"
2. Differences:
 - . Adam sinned, Jesus obeyed
 - a. what Adam did resulted in much death, what Christ did results in much life
 - b. what happened in Adam was a judgment (deserved), what happened in Christ was a free gift
 - c. in Adam death reigned, in Christ life reigns
 - d. in Adam there was condemnation, in Christ there is justification
3. The point is that Jesus is the head of a new humanity, in Him God has recreated mankind (cf. Eph 4:24). Just as we formerly followed the head of humanity in sin to death, so now we are to follow the new head of the new humanity in righteousness to life.

- B. Notes on Rom 5:12-14. These verses have been favorite Calvinistic proof-texts and have been the object of much controversy.
1. Rom 5:12 -- this verse does not "impute" ("transfer") the sin of Adam to others. It says all die because all sinned. The point is that all have followed in the footsteps of Adam and have received what he got: death. Adam led us to death.
 - . "all men" here does not mean "all without exception," but means "Jews and Gentiles alike." If it means "all without exception" then we have a problem in v 18 -- all will be saved?
 2. Rom 5:13-14 -- Calvinists appeal to this verse to say that sin is some kind of "substance" that gets passed on from one generation to another, whether there is law or not.
 - . But Paul is saying that we know that there was sin in the world because there was death, which is the product of sin.
 - a. And death "reigned" even before the Law of Moses was given -- indicating that there was law man was accountable to (for if there had been no law, there could be no sin, and without sin there would have been no death).
 - b. There was another law -- it was just not the same kind of law (direct, explicit commands from God) that Adam or the Jews had; Paul mentioned the law known naturally in 2:14-15. The word "offense" in v 14 is not the usual, generic word for sin (*hamartia*, ἁμαρτία), but a more specific term (*parabasis*, παράβασις) denoting transgression, that is, disobeying a particular law. The Law of Moses simply sharpened our understanding and awareness of sin (Rom 5:20), but sin was already a problem before the Law of Moses was given.
- C. Summary: Rom 5:19-21.
1. The Law did not take away sin; it only increased our awareness of it (recall 3:20). In a sense, it only made the problem worse.
 2. The solution was not through the Law, but through God's grace.
 - . Salvation from sin comes not because we earn it through works, but because God graciously gives it to us when we believe.
 - a. And God's grace was more than adequate to deal with the problem of sin.

The Demand of Justification (Righteousness)

Romans 6:1-23

Every blessing carries with it a responsibility. The whole point of Rom 6 is this: now that you have been declared righteous (justified) by God, stay that way!

- VII. Some thought (maliciously, Rom 3:8) that Paul's assertions about the grace of God and liberty in Christ amounted to a license to sin. 6:1,15; 3:8. But nothing could be farther from the truth.
- A. The fact is that the gospel rescued us from sin. How could this be a license to sin?
 - B. The fact that God's grace more than abounds to deal with the problem of sin (Rom 5:20) in no way implies that we should go on sinning (as if more sin would mean more grace). Rom 6:1.
 - 1. The grace of God was more than able to deliver us from the terrible problem of sin, but the reason God did it was so that we might remain righteous, not that we could go on sinning!
 - C. Rom 6:2 -- "die" and "live" are opposites; to die to sin and then go on living in it involves a contradiction!
- VIII. Paul's discussion of baptism shows that obedience to the gospel makes us dead to sin and alive to righteousness. Rom 6:3-11.
- A. What does baptism have to do with Paul's discussion here?
 - 1. Everything!
 - . In 4:25 Paul had mentioned the twin facts of the death and resurrection of Jesus as being the object of saving faith.
 - a. In 5:10 Paul again mentioned the twin facts of the death and resurrection as that which reconciles us to God.
 - 2. The death & resurrection of Jesus is thus the core of the gospel. See 1 Cor 15:1ff.
 - 3. And baptism is exactly the point at which the believer identifies himself with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Saving faith is wrapped up in baptism (Col 2:12).
 - 4. It is important to understand what the death and resurrection of Jesus *means*.
 - . It is a historical event, yes, but it is more: it is also a pattern. cf. Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23. Rom 6:17 -- it is the "form (model, pattern) of teaching" to which we commit ourselves.
 - a. Just as Jesus died and lived again, so all His followers must do so spiritually. They must die to sin and live to righteousness. 1 Pet 2:24.

- b. We must understand that it is a metaphor for complete, radical change in one's life. It is a change that is so drastic and comprehensive that it is described in the language of death and resurrection; it is a total starting over. cf. John 3:3ff; Eph 4:22-24.
 - c. When a person by faith is baptized, God justifies him, and his life begins anew in the sight of God. And that new person, that new beginning, is supposed to be radically different from the old person (characterized by sin).
- B. Baptism is a union with Christ, specifically with His death. (Rom 6:3-8a)
 - 1. We are baptized *into Christ Jesus* and *into His death*. (v 3)
 - 2. We were buried *with Him* through baptism into death. (v 4)
 - 3. We have become united *with Him* in the likeness of His death. (v 5)
 - 4. The old self was crucified *with Him*. (v 6)
 - 5. We have died *with Christ*. (v 8a)
 - 6. The truth stated in v 7 will be the object of more attention later (Romans 7). The point for now is that baptism means death to sin, and once released from its mastery we must not go back to be slaves of it any longer.
- C. In God's way of doing things, death is the way to life. Rom 6:8b-11 (cf. v 5).
 - 1. This was the paradox of the gospel that caused both Jews and Gentiles such difficulty (cf. 1 Cor 2). It was not according to worldly wisdom; in God's wisdom, the way to life is the way of death, the way to exaltation (glory) is the way of lowliness (humility), the way to wealth is the way of poverty, etc.
 - . John 12:23ff
 - 2. v 8 -- cf. 2 Tim 2:11; John 14:19; 1 Thes 4:14. We will have what Christ has.
 - . It has sometimes been asked if the living here is spiritual life in Christ, or eternal life (given at the resurrection at the last day). But this is to introduce a false dichotomy, a distinction the NT itself does not make. The two are really the same (cf. 2 Cor 2:15f). Life in Christ (v 11) leads to eternal life (v 8).
 - 3. v 9 -- Christ's new life is indomitable, unconquerable. He conquered death, and it will never again conquer (master) Him.
 - . And it is important to understand here that, in the Biblical way of thinking, sin and death are two sides of the same coin. They always go together. cf. Eph 2:1.
 - 4. vv 10f -- the pattern of Jesus' experience (death to sin, alive to God) must be true of us, His followers. Jesus conquered sin/death, and we must too.
- IX. Another way of saying this is that sin must not reign in us. Rom 6:12-23 (picks up from v 9).

- A. The post-baptism life must not be mastered by sin (as the pre-baptism life was).
 - 1. What should reign instead will be discussed in chapter 8.
 - 2. Specifically, Paul says that this means we must not use our bodies in the service of sin (as in 1:26ff and 2:21ff). Don't use your body to do evil things; use it to serve God!
- B. We have become slaves of a new master. Rom 6:14b-23.
 - 1. v 14 b --
 - . Paul here will discuss the "master" metaphor; the point about the "law" will be discussed in chapter 7.
 - a. But v 14 recapitulates Rom 5:20-21 -- since we are under the saving grace of God, we are freed from sin and must stay that way.
 - 2. Does the fact that we are under grace mean we can sin? Not at all - v 15.
 - 3. We will always be slaves. The only question is: to which master will we belong? To the master of sin, or the master of righteousness?
 - . We were all once slaves of sin (v17a); and the service of sin only leads to further sin (v 19), and then to death (vv 21, 23a).
 - a. But the gospel freed us from that service (v 17b, 22a)
 - b. To become slaves of righteousness (v 18), so that we might be sanctified people (c 22b), and gain life (vv 22c, 23b).
 - 4. v 19 -- of course, this is all figurative language designed to make a simple point: we must not go on sinning. The goal of what we have done in baptism is that we should be sanctified (holy, pure) people.

How to Meet the Demand of Justification

Romans 7:1 - 8:27

- X. Some notes about Paul's understanding of the Law.
 - A. Paul puts three things in the same category: sin, the Law, and the flesh. They are connected to each other.
 - 1. Note the similarities:
 - . we died to sin (6:2) and we died to the Law (7:4)
 - a. we are free from sin (6:18) and free from the Law (7:3)
 - b. we are justified from sin (6:7) and discharged from the Law (7:6)

- c. we walk in newness of life (6:4) and newness of the Spirit (the opposite of the Law; 7:6)
 - 2. In Rom 6:14 Paul said that the reason sin will not reign over us now as it did before is that we are not under law, a system of law like that of Moses. That is, as long as we are under law, we will be mastered by sin because the function of law is to point out sin and condemn the sinner (Gal 3:10).
 - . Rom 3:20 -- the Law could not justify; it takes the grace of God to do that.
 - 3. Note the connection between the Law and the flesh in Gal 5.
 - B. We also have to understand the mentality Paul was speaking against.
 - 1. To the Jewish way of thinking, the Law of Moses was perfect. To advocate that we are not under the Law meant, to them, that we are free to do whatever we wish. In other words, many Jews interpreted Paul's gospel to advocate lawlessness.
 - . So see Rom 3:8; 6:1, 15.
 - a. The same problem is at the heart of Acts 15.
 - 2. But Paul has already shown that once we are justified by the grace of God we must not live in sin any longer. God's grace makes its own demand upon us, the demand to stay righteous.
 - 3. It now remains for Paul to show that since we are under grace, and since grace has a moral obligation attached to it, we are no longer under the Law and its moral obligation.
- XI. When we died with Christ we died to the Law. Rom 7:1-6.
- A. "As long as he lives" -- v1; but Paul has already established that we have died to sin with Christ (6:2ff).
 - B. Paul uses the marriage relationship as an analogy to illustrate his point about the believer's relationship to the Law.
 - 1. vv 2-3 explain the marriage relationship
 - 2. vv 4-6 make the analogy to the believer and the Law.
 - . We have to understand that Paul is drawing a loose analogy here. The point is that death = freedom from law. This is the truth Paul derives from vv 2-3 and applies here in vv 4-6.
 - a. v 5 -- note the connection between the Law and sin: the Law aroused sinful passions in our flesh, which, when followed, led us to death. More on this in vv 14-24.
 - b. v 6 -- Paul's mention of the Spirit here will receive fuller treatment in chapter 8.
- XII. Satan used the Law to encourage sinning. Rom 7:7-13.
- A. How did the Law come to be connected with sin in Paul's way of thinking?
 - 1. Because sin used the Law to arouse sinful desires within us.
 - 2. This does not mean that the Law is sinful. The Law is holy and righteous and good (v 12).

3. Nor does it mean that the Law encouraged sinning. No, its purpose was to point out sin (Rom 3:20) so that we might know what was sinful (Rom 7:7a) and avoid it.

B. How it worked: (Paul uses coveting as an example) vv 7-13

1. The Law revealed that coveting was sinful. v 7. We would not have known that this was sinful if the Law had not pointed that out to us. Thus the Law did its job of pointing out sin.
 - . It is important to understand how Paul is using the word "sin" in this context. While sin is the transgression of the law of God (1 John 3:4 KJV), Paul also uses the word to denote sinful desire, the lust of the flesh. That is, sin, by metonymy, can also mean that (desire) which causes sin. cf. Matt 5:22-48; Jam 1:14-15.
 - a. And it is also important to note that those sinful desires are "rooted" in the flesh.
2. But sin used the Law to provoke us. By becoming aware of what was wrong, we then began to think about those things, and want them, and practice them.
 - . We thus ended up doing the very thing the Law forbade, because sin used the Law to get us to think about it and desire it.
 - a. The Law made us conscious of the sinfulness of the desires of the flesh, but the problem was that once those desires were identified and we became explicitly conscious of them, they "came alive" (v 9) in us.
 - b. In this sense, then, sin lived through the Law (vv 8b-9).
3. Again, this is not because the Law encouraged sin, but sinful desires were aroused when the Law mentioned them to us. There is some of the wisdom of God in this (v 13):
 - . God's Law is not the problem
 - a. but sin used something good (the Law) to do something evil
 - b. so the Law still worked as God designed it -- it pointed our sin -- but in a way far more drastic than we realized.

XIII. The Law did not have the moral power to produce rightness with God. Rom 7:14-25.

- A. Much ink has been spilled over who Paul is describing in these verses. The unregenerate? Christians?
 1. But in the context it is clear: this is Paul's criticism of the Law of Moses.
 2. The problem with the Law was that it addressed the flesh, and through it sin became alive in us (recall vv 7-13).
 - . There is a sense in which the flesh has a mind of its own. Paul is using language figuratively. We could just as easily say that the mind is divided, but Paul prefers to speak of the flesh (the out man) vs. the mind (the inner man).

3. But Paul's mind did not want to sin. His mind and flesh were pulling him in two different directions at the same time.
 - . That is, this is what the Law of Moses did to Paul. It pointed out his sin, and through the Law sin became alive in him, but he did not want to practice sin. Thus the Law made Paul a miserable man.
 - a. The Law became the instrument by which sinful passions dominated him, which domination he hated (because he also knew from the Law that he should not live that way).
 - b. In other words, the Law lacked the power to enable Paul to rise above sin. Because through the Law sinful passions became alive, the Law became an instrument of death.
- B. So in v 24, Paul cries out. The Law could not deliver/save him from this plight; the Law was part of the problem (in that sin used it to work in him).

XIV. The Spirit is the solution. By receiving the Spirit we can conquer the flesh. 8:1-27.

- A. The Spirit has freed us from the law that produced sin and death. 8:1-4.
 1. The Law could not take sins away, but God did this through Jesus.
 - . Jesus fulfilled the requirement of the Law (which demanded death for sin).
 2. When we unite ourselves with Him and live with Him (recall 6:4-11) we are no longer slaves to sin (Rom 6:16-18), no longer do we face the death sin brought; we appropriate the victory Jesus accomplished.
 - . If you can understand the idea of uniting yourself with Christ (especially His death and resurrection), then you have an idea of what it means to walk by His Spirit. It is to become one with Him, to live as He lives: in conquest over sin and death.
- B. It is a changing of our minds. Rom 8:5-8.
 1. We must quit minding the things of the flesh which are hostile to God and which produce death (Rom 8:5-8)
 2. And we must set our minds on the things of the Spirit, which are in harmony with God and produces life and peace (Rom 8:5-6).
- C. When the Spirit is in us, we live. Rom 8:9-11.
 1. It is the Spirit of God that makes someone alive. Flesh and death go together, and so do Spirit and life. Rom 8:9-11.
 - . cf. Gen 2:7.
 2. Thus having been made alive by God's Spirit, we must continue to walk by it (maintain our unity with the life-giving Spirit). Rom 8:12-13. cf. Gal 5:25.
- D. Note on the indwelling of the Spirit:
 1. There are two false extremes we must avoid:
 - . The Spirit indwells us bodily. The Bible nowhere says this.

- a. The Spirit in us is nothing other than the word in us. The Spirit delivered the word, and the Spirit "enters" us through the word, but the Spirit is not the same as the word.
 - 2. We must understand that every person has a spirit, and a man's spirit is the essence of who he is. It is your spirit that accounts for who you are, what you do, etc. Your spirit is the inner you, the "real" you that survives the death of the body.
 - 3. Your spirit and your mind are intimately connected. To have the Spirit in you is the same thing as setting your mind on the Spirit. You connect your spirit with the Spirit.
 - . How do you do this? By taking in what the Spirit gives through the word; the word is the connection between you and the Spirit. Through the word we learn how to be, think, act, speak, etc. But understand that this is not just knowing what the Bible says -- it is more than that; it is making what God said through His word the very definition and essence of yourself, of your spirit. You become in your spirit what the word describes -- and what the word describes is the very Spirit of God Himself.
 - 4. What Paul is teaching in Rom 8 is that my spirit must become united with the Holy Spirit, so that my Spirit is exactly like the Spirit of God. When my spirit is united with God's Spirit, then my spirit thinks in the same way, loves the same things, hates the same things, desires the same things, as God's Spirit.
 - . How does my spirit become like God's? Through the word, which informs me of God. When I take in the word and allow it to be the master of my life, my spirit becomes like God's, and that is how the Spirit dwells in me.
- E. Having God's Spirit in us is what makes us God's children. Rom 8:14-17.
 - 1. cf. Rom 8:9b.
 - 2. Children share the qualities of their father. In this case, God's children share with Him that they have the same Spirit in them that God Himself is. Rom 8:14, 16.
 - 3. And the Spirit of God in us is what makes us close to God, v 15. It is our connection to God.
 - 4. And if we are God's children, then children are also heirs, heirs of glory (v 17).
- F. Rom 8:18-25 expounds on the "glory" mentioned in v 17.
 - 1. The whole creation longs to be glorified. vv 19-22.
 - 2. Our longing for glory is part of the same longing of all creation. vv 18, 23-25.
 - . The Spirit in us is a foretaste, a sample, of the glory that awaits us. v 23.
 - a. But full and final glory is something that we have yet to experience. vv 24-25.

- G. Rom 8:26-27 picks up on v 15, and speaks further of how the Spirit is our connection to God.
 - 1. The Spirit intercedes for us to God by taking the requests we have but do not know how to say, and He "speaks" those requests to God for us.
 - 2. God knows the mind of the Spirit, and so our requests are made known to God because the Spirit takes them into His mind, and God knows the mind of the Spirit.

Living Like Justified People

Romans 12-15

- XV. Justified people serve God. Rom 12:1-2. This statement is the theme of Rom 12-15, just as 1:16-17 is the theme of Rom 1-11.
 - A. Serving and giving ourselves to God is the proper response to what God has done for us.
 - 1. cf. Heb 12:28. "Offer service" is the verb form of the word "service" (*latreia*, λατρεία) here in Rom 12:1, and is a technical term for the work of priests; it is our job, our duty, our obligation to serve God. All we do for God is to be done out of reverence, awe, and a spirit of worship. cf. Rom 1:9; 2 Tim 1:3; Acts 27:23.
 - 2. We serve by giving. God gave abundantly to us and for us; in response He desires that we, in turn, give ourselves to Him and for Him.
 - . cf. 1 John 4:9-10, 19. Our love for Him is a response to His love for us.
 - a. Gal 2:20 -- Paul's life was a response to the love God had shown to Him in Christ
 - B. Justified people give their bodies to God, they use them for His service. v 1.
 - 1. cf. Rom 6:12-19
 - 2. "Living sacrifice" -- not that of a martyr, but a constant giving of self to God, minute by minute.
 - C. Justified people give their minds to God. v 2.
 - 1. We will live according to how we think. cf. Rom 8:5-8; Eph 2:3; 4:17; Phil 3:19; Col 1:21.
 - 2. We must change our minds and conform them to the will of God. cf. Eph 4:23; Col 3:2.
 - 3. When the mind is set right, the right deeds will follow.

. "Prove" means "demonstrate," "manifest."

XVI. Justified people serve each other. Rom 12:3-21.

- A. Service to God involves service to others, especially to others in God's family.
 - 1. When we come to God, God puts us into His family, His group (church). Part of serving God is serving God's family, God's people.
- B. We serve by using the talents (abilities) God has given us. Rom 12:3-8.
 - 1. Each person is different in this regard, and that difference is good and vital to the well-being of the whole body (cf. a similar presentation in 1 Cor 12).
 - 2. Every talent has its place and use, every one is needed. Thus no one is to think him/herself better or more important than others because of the talent he/she has. vv 3, 16. It is all too easy to set up self as the standard others must meet, but this we must not do.
 - 3. It appears that Paul has in mind here primarily those gifts that are not miraculous in nature, but are God-given nonetheless. Every person has a talent he/she can use for the good of the body of Christ.
 - . 1 Pet 4:10-11.
- C. The essence of service is love. Rom 12:9-21.
 - 1. Love for that which is good. v 9 (cf. 1 Cor 13:6).
 - 2. Love for each other. vv 10, 13, 15-16 (cf. 1 Cor 13:4b-5a; Gal 5:13). To love another means to set them first and dedicate yourself to them.
 - 3. Love for God. vv 11-12.
 - 4. Love for enemies. vv 14, 17-21. cf. Matt 5:43-48.

XVII. Justified people obey the law. Rom 13:1-10.

- A. Which law?
 - 1. Answer: any law to which we are properly subject that does not contradict the law of God. This includes the law of the civil government.
 - 2. The civil government with its laws is:
 - . Sanctioned by God -- thus Christians should obey it as a matter of conscience (v 5b).
 - 1. This does not mean, however, that government cannot be perverted or abuse its power or step out of its rightful place. It certainly can; cf. Acts 5:29; the situation in Rev.
 - 2. But when there is no conflict with the demands of Christ, we must submit to the laws of the land.
 - a. A means of restraining and punishing evil. Christians are also obligated to obey its demands to avoid punishment for wrongdoing (v 5a). cf. 1 Pet 2:19f; 4:15.
- B. Our obedience to the law of the land is really another application of that truth discussed in 12:9-21 -- everything we do, we do out of love.

1. When we love someone we feel ourselves obligated to them. To love all men means that we are obligated to all people to act in their best interests and for their good.
2. Hence in Rom 13:8-10 Paul mentions again the subject of love. It is not that he is coming back to the subject, but 13:1-7 is one of the ways we show love for all people.
3. If we love others, we will have no problem obeying the laws that are designed to prevent people from hurting each other.

XVIII. Justified people live in the light. Rom 13:11-14.

- A. While we are to mind the laws of this world, this world must not get our allegiance.
 1. That is, Paul has not argued in 13:1-10 that we must commit ourselves to the world. There is a big difference between peaceable, law-abiding people and being people who are conformed to the character of this world (12:1f).
- B. The fact is that we live in this world in the light of the future.
 1. The day of Christ is a fixed day -- Acts 17:31. We do not know when it is, but one thing is clear: it gets closer every day (Rom 13:11). Every day, therefore, it is even more important that we live righteously.
- C. This fact that the day of judgment approaches swiftly means:
 1. v 12 -- We must change the way we live.
 2. v 13 -- We must live properly.
 3. v 14 -- We must adorn ourselves with Christ.

XIX. Justified people accept each other. Rom 14:1 - 15:14.

- A. The background.
 1. We do not know in detail the situation in the church in Rome that prompted this instruction.
 2. We can reconstruct fairly certainly:
 - . That there was the threat of division, or it had already started (else why would Paul tell them these things?).
 - a. This division may have been along Jew/Gentile lines. cf. Rom 11:17ff; 15:7ff. But it is *not* clear that the situation is the same as in 1 Cor 8 (which involved idolatry).
 3. Remember that in this context Paul has been discussing the fact that justified people serve through love. That is the spirit of this passage also.
 - . Also, the practice of love, as presented in the NT, creates unity. cf. Col 2:2; 3:14; Phil 2:2.
 4. It should be obvious that Paul is here discussing how to treat each other when we have different opinions, different personal convictions, or adopt differing ways of applying our beliefs -- none of which are contrary to the truth of the gospel.
 - . 14:5, 14, 20 -- it was about what some people thought, but it was not divine truth. The discussion is *not* about matters on which God has spoken (truth and morality).

- a. If some had *insisted* that all Christians still observe the Jewish rites and regulations, Paul would have reacted like he did in Galatians: he would have fought against such a view strenuously.
 - b. But what is under consideration here are not matters of the truth ("the (one) faith"), not matters of right and wrong as laid down in Scripture. There can be no compromise on those things, on those things we must agree (Eph 4:1-6); but there *can* be differences among us about things not specified in Scripture.
 - c. It should also be obvious that Paul is not here discussing things done by the church as a group (as a church). He is discussing things individual Christians do.
5. The terms involved:
- . "Faith" in this context = personal faith, personal convictions, one's own understanding, appropriation, and application of the truth of the gospel to his/her life. It is not about "*the* (one) faith."
 - a. The weak: weak = limited, their personal convictions will not allow them to do certain things. They have a more restrictive view/application of things. They have made a personal decision not to do something, and Paul says that the decision must not be pressed upon others. Why? Because it is not based on revealed truth, but on one's own application of the truth in his own life; to press it upon others is to make rules God did not make!
 - 1. These were quite possibly Jewish Christians who abstained from eating certain foods and observed certain days because their Jewish upbringing compelled them to do so.
 - b. The strong: they have a fuller understanding of liberty in Christ, and their personal convictions allow them to do things that weaker ones will not do.
 - 1. These were quite possibly Gentile Christians who ate all kinds of foods and who did not observe special days to the Lord.

B. The instructions:

- 1. Those who are weak (limited) in their personal convictions are to be accepted by those whose personal convictions allow them more liberty (the strong). 14:1.
 - . This tells us that the "weaker" ones were in the minority and were being shunned by the stronger ones.
 - a. But the weaker ones are not to be accepted for the purpose of "judging disputes." What does this mean? It is somewhat ambiguous, but the sense of it seems to be that the weaker one is to be accepted without making his personal

convictions a condition of acceptance. That is, accept him regardless of his personal views.

2. None are to reject each other. 14:2-12.
 - . The strong must not look down on the weak as being an inferior Christian. The weak ones are sincere in their practice (else they would not do it!; 14:6).
 - a. and the weak must not condemn the strong for doing what they feel they themselves cannot do. He must learn and accept that just because he will not do something does not mean it is wrong for everyone to do it
 - b. This is, of course, harder for the weaker brother to do than it is for the stronger brother.
 - c. Why must we not reject each other? 2 reasons:
 1. Because the Lord has accepted both the weak and the strong. If He accepts them, so must we. Rom 14:3f, 7-9. In other words, these things are not to be tests of fellowship!
 2. Because we are not another's judge. That job belongs to the Lord. Rom 14:10-12.
3. Instead we are to act in such ways that edify each other. 14:13-23.
 - . vv 13, 19 state the rule here.
 - a. Note also v 17 -- the essence of the kingdom of God is nothing as petty as food. The kingdom is all about righteousness (hence we may not do wrong to another), peace (reconciliation, getting along with each other), and joy (glad to be in it with each other).
 - b. What is it that Paul did not want the strong to do to the weak? Answer: anything that would cause them to violate their conscience. It is not about their being irritated, annoyed, catering to their whims, etc. The weak may have felt pressured to eat certain things in order to be accepted, but this caused them to violate their consciences. This, Paul says, the strong must not cause to happen. cf. vv 13, 15, 21.
 - c. vv 21-23 are crucial:
 1. If it causes another to stumble, then don't do it (even if the thing is not wrong in itself). This means sacrificing our liberty if necessary. This is the practice of love, and love is a giving, sacrificing thing. Of course, I may do it in contexts that do not involve the weak brother.
 2. Keep your personal convictions to yourself. Do not expect or demand that others see or do things exactly as you do.
 3. Do not do anything that you think is wrong.
4. We are to think of each other first, we are to act so as to please each other instead of self. 15:1-6.

- . Really, the problem is partly one of selfishness. The solution is learning to act selflessly.
 - a. Strength carries with it the responsibility of helping those who are weak. Those who prided themselves on being strong especially had an obligation to the weaker ones. 15:1.
 - b. This is the example of Christ Himself, as the Old Testament teaches. Rom 15:3-4.
 - c. When we put each other first, we will attain unity. Rom 15:5-6.
5. We are to accept each other. 15:7-14.
- . Christ has accepted both Jew and Gentile. Rom 15:7-9.
 - a. vv 9-12 are OT quotations that demonstrate that Gentiles are indeed acceptable to God through Christ.
 - b. vv 13-14 express Paul's prayer and desire for their unity.

[return to Palmetto Church of Christ home page](#)