

ROMANS: THE CLEARER GOSPEL OF ALL

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Chapter 1

Introduction

(Romans 1:1-17)

I would like to turn to my favorite book in the Bible, the book of Romans. No book or section of scripture expounds so clearly and so masterfully the plan of salvation — the doctrine of righteousness by faith — than the epistle to the Romans. No wonder Martin Luther described the epistle to the Romans as the “clearest Gospel of all.” In fact, it was through his understanding of verse 17 of chapter 1 that Luther was delivered from his bondage to legalism and became the leader of the Protestant Reformation.

The same doctrine which was expounded by Luther led to the conversion of John Bunyan, and I don’t know how many of you folks know John Bunyan. He’s referred to in England as the “immortal tinker of Bedford.” But most of you folks know him here as the author of Pilgrims

Progress. It was while he was in prison at Bedford [England] that he wrote that famous book.

In the same way, it was by listening to the preface to Luther's commentary on Romans that John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church, felt that his heart was "strangely warmed" on the evening of 24 May 1738, which brought about the birth of that tremendous revival in Britain in the 18th century.

I can give you lots of examples. Romans has been the basis of most of the revivals in the history of the Christian church. The question is, what makes Romans very special? Well, I'd like to give you two reasons. One is a general reason, and one is a specific one.

1. Please turn your Bibles to the book of Acts, chapter 9. Here we have the account of Paul's conversion. The Book of Acts is a historical account of how God revealed Himself through His church. The first four books of the New Testament are a historical account about Jesus Christ. The

fifth book, the Book of Acts, is about His church. And in chapter 9 of the Book of Acts, we have the wonderful account of how Paul, on the Damascus Road, found Jesus Christ. Remember, God came to Ananias and said, “I want you to go and meet this young man and bless him, and baptize him and let his eyes open.”

Well, Ananias wasn't sure that God hadn't made a mistake, because here was the greatest persecutor of the Christian church. And I want you to notice what God says to Ananias in Acts 9:15:

But the Lord said to Him, [i.e., Ananias] “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name [or to bear my truth] before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel.

And we are told that, after Paul was given back his vision and was baptized, in verse 20:

At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

Immediately, he preached Jesus Christ.

So Paul was a chosen vessel. In other words, when Christ came to this world, He came that there might be a Gospel to be preached. But it was Paul that God chose to be the instrument to expound that Gospel to the world.

With this in mind, turn to chapter one of the Book of Romans. I want you to notice how Paul introduces this wonderful epistle of his:

Paul, a servant [the Greek word is slave] of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle [but notice this next statement] and set apart for the gospel of God.

Paul was the Theologian of the New Testament. Almost half of the New Testament is Paul's writing. We would be terribly at a loss, as a Christian church, if we did not have his writings. So number one, Paul was God's chosen vessel, to expound the gospel to the world.

2. But I would like to give you another reason,

a more specific reason, for Romans. Unlike any of Paul's epistles, whether it be to the church or to individuals, this is the only letter he wrote to a church, to a body of Christians, whom he had not established or to whom he had not been.

In other words, Paul, when he wrote Corinthians and Ephesians, and individual letters, was writing to people to whom he had already expounded the gospel verbally. Unfortunately, in those days, they did not have tape recorders. But in Romans, he was writing to a people whom he had never met before. (There were a few individuals whom he had known in his previous experience.) And, because of this, he is expounding to them all the wonderful truths of the Gospel.

For example, look at verse 11 of chapter 1. There he tells us that the purpose of writing this letter, the purpose of his coming to Rome:

I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong.

And then in verse 13 he says:

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.

In chapter 15, verse 22 and 23, he tells us why he was hindered:

This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you....

God said to him, “No, you cannot go to Rome until you finish the work in the Middle East. You have to enter every unentered area.”

I believe God had another reason, and that is: He had you and me in mind. Because, you see, if Paul did not write the message in clear, distinct tones, then we would not have it in written form.

But because he had not yet been to Rome, he was writing to a people that he had not seen, he is expounding the gospel in all its clarity so that it came to us in the Word of God.

So Romans is the clearest gospel of all. Luther was right when he says, “This is the clearest Gospel of all.”

Paul’s whole purpose — as he mentions in verse 11 (shown above) — in writing this somewhat lengthy letter is that he may establish the Christians in Rome in Christ. You see, they were facing persecution. And my great burden is that you will be established in Jesus Christ. And the best way, of course, is to look at this book. We’re going to spend more than 30 studies in this wonderful truth. As we go step by step, we will see what Paul is telling us about the plan of salvation.

The great theme of this book is expressed in chapter 1, verses 15, 16, and 17. I would like to look at it for a moment. Paul has already told the Romans that he wants to come to Rome. In verse

14, he tells them:

I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.

He wants to preach this Gospel to everybody in Rome. Now Rome, of course, was the capital of the world that was counted in those days. And he's saying in verse 15:

That is why I am so eager [in other words, with every ability that I have] to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. [I have preached it in the Middle East, now I want to come to Rome.]

And then he makes this statement in verse 16:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

It was quite customary in Paul's day, when they wanted to make an emphasis, to put things in the negative. So he puts it in the negative to

emphasize the positive. Now I think that if Paul was living today, he would have put it in the positive because that's how it is in the western world. He would have said, "I am absolutely, completely surrounded, and I am completely excited, about the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have nothing else to do but to preach it."

Paul is saying that he is not ashamed of the Gospel, because the Romans looked at the Christians as third-class citizens. The Romans had class distinctions. The Romans themselves were first-class citizens. In fact, because they were first-class citizens, it was generally understood that Romans were never crucified, because crucifixion always brought shame to your country and to your nation. So Romans, as a general rule, were never crucified; they were first-class citizens. And then the Romans looked at the Jews as second-class citizens. But the Christians, who worshipped a crucified Saviour, were looked at as third-class citizens. But Paul is saying, "Ashamed? Not at all! Why? Because I have come to you with not another philosophy."

Rome was a very proud city. It boasted of military power, of architectural power, of economic power. It had all kinds of philosophies being proclaimed in that city. Paul was saying, “I have not come with another blueprint invented by man. I am not ashamed of this gospel, because it is the power of God!”

Rome, with all her pride and all her success, had failed to do one thing. It had failed to conquer sin. And Paul was saying, “There is only one Power that can conquer sin: the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ashamed of it? Why should I be? It’s the only power that can save man. As long as he accepts that salvation, as long as he believes, whether he be Jew or Greek, it doesn’t matter. Whether he be wise or educated or uneducated; whether he be rich or poor, there is only one solution for man’s sinful problem, and that is Jesus Christ.”

And then in verse 17, he defines this gospel in one phrase:

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Please note that! “It is the righteousness of God.” What does he mean by that?

1. It is a righteousness planned by God.
2. It is a righteousness prepared by God without any human contribution. (We will see this in more detail as we come to chapter three, verse 21 onwards.)
3. It is a righteousness that is made available by God Himself. I want this to be clear. In the New Testament, we read that it is God Who takes the initiative for our salvation. The Gospel is not conditional Good News. God doesn't say to the world, and to you and me, “You first have to be good,” or “First you must make yourself disposable to me, then I will save you.” When we come to chapter 5, we will discover that, while we were

helpless, incapable of saving ourselves, while we were ungodly, while we were enemies, and while we were sinners, God reconciled us to Himself by the death of His Son. God takes the initiative.

Here in the western world, and in our church as a whole, we have twisted the thing around. We hold efforts and we tell people, “Come to our halls, and listen to the Gospel.” That’s not the New Testament. The New Testament, and the commission that Christ gave is: “Go into all the world” and do what? Just like God takes the initiative we must take the initiative, folks. The world is desperately waiting for the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was planned by Him, it was prepared by Him in His Son Jesus Christ, and it was made available by Him. He takes the initiative, He gets all the credit and all the glory. This is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, what Paul is trying to present in this book is the unconditional good news of salvation, which He prepared for us in His Son

Jesus Christ. That, of course, is the grand theme of all of the Bible, Old and New Testament. But, nowhere is it set forth so clearly, and argued so masterfully, as in the Epistle to the Romans.

In this book, the Apostle Paul unfolds to us the whole counsel of God:

1. He presents to us our sin problem: man's sinful condition.
2. He gives us the truth about Christ, His life and His death as our Substitute and our Surety.
3. He describes faith in Christ as the basis of making that salvation effective, or the solution to our sin problem.
4. Then he goes on to the work of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification.
5. He also describes the place of God's people in this world. We have a work to do in this world! He describes that.
6. Lastly, he gives practical applications of the Gospel in daily Christian living.

So everything that we need in the plan of salvation is found in this book. It is a difficult book, because he's writing not to scholars; he's writing to people who thought so differently than our people today in the 20th century. That's why I wrote the paraphrase of Romans. My purpose was to try and breach the gap in this paraphrase, so that the Gospel of Romans will become meaningful to you.

Now, we are going to study this in fairly deep detail as we go along, because here is the most extended treatment of the entire range of scripture on this crucial doctrine of righteousness by faith.

You know, God brought this message to us [Seventh-day Adventists] 100 years ago. We are still struggling with it. We have to have committees, and we have to have seminars to try and get together to see what the message is. The devil doesn't want us to know this message. And he has had tremendous success in keeping us in darkness. As we go to the Book of Romans, I hope that we will see clearly this wonderful message,

because, as I read Ellen G. White, she says that our churches are dying because of a need on preaching on righteousness by faith.

She also makes the statement in the light of the 1888 message. She says that it is the duty of God's people to search the truth, to remove the error. When that is done, she says, one truth will prevail, one subject will swallow up every other: "Christ our Righteousness."

I tell you, if it wasn't for this message I wouldn't be here today. Five years of my ministry was in legalism, and I got so discouraged, I was willing to give up. It's only because God turned me around by this message that I actually enjoy preaching from the pulpit even though, by nature, I'm an introvert.

Recently I was speaking to the medical students at Loma Linda [University in Loma Linda, California, U.S.A.], and I was amazed at their hunger for the truth. I could not believe this could happen in America. It could only happen in Africa.

I spoke from 10:30 in the morning to 5:30 in the evening with only one hour break. For me to see American medical students sitting there and studying and opening their Bibles, there is hope even for California. Some people think nothing good comes from out there, but I'll tell you, there are young people, medical students, who are not secular, whose desire is to know the Word of God and to proclaim it. When we finished, these young men and women got together and they said, "What can we do to proclaim this here in our own university?" So there is hope, because this is the power of the Gospel.

In closing, I would like to give a brief résumé of what this doctrine of righteousness by faith, expounded in Romans, is all about. There are four major areas that Paul covers in this book:

1. This doctrine of Righteousness by faith is a truth that tells us that God has already — I want to remind you: it is a past tense — He has already redeemed not the elect, like the Calvinists teach, but all mankind, in the holy history of His Son

Jesus Christ. So that legally, all humanity — and that’s the unconditional Good News of the Gospel — legally, all humanity stands justified in Christ. For example, in Ephesians 1:3 Paul tells us that:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us [past tense, “aorist” in the original; something that has already happened: we have already been blessed] in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

And this is what Paul will expound in Romans.

2. He goes on to tell us that this legal justification, while it may apply to all mankind, has to be made effective. All mankind will not go to heaven, not because God hasn’t redeemed them, but because they have rejected this salvation. This legal justification is made effective by faith alone and nothing else. It isn’t by faith plus going to the Holy Land, or paying tithe, or keeping the Sabbath. Those are fruits of justification.

Except going to the Holy Land. All you will see there is commercialism. I worked in the Middle East. It's disgusting how they have turned sacred things into secular. They offered us crosses all over the city of Jerusalem and claimed that this was the original wood on which Jesus died. And I told one Jew, "If you collect all those pieces of wood, they would be like the loaves and fishes that Christ multiplied because it'll produce I don't know how many crosses out of that one cross that Christ died on." But I had to remind them that it was not the wood that saves us. Folks, we do not put emphasis on things. There is nothing "holy" about the Holy Lands. There is much fighting there, much insecurity. It is the Lord of this universe Who died on the cross Who saves us, and we don't have to go to Israel to find Him. We can find Him here in America. Do you know that?

That legal justification is made effective by faith alone. This means that the believer who accepts Christ is clothed with the perfect righteousness of Christ, which is known as imputed righteousness. So that, as far as God is concerned

(maybe not as far as we think of ourselves, or what others think, but as far as God is concerned), we are qualified for heaven now and in the judgment. And folks, this is the basis of peace. As Paul says in Romans 5:1:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....

You know, I saw something today that really made me happy because I saw the power of the Gospel in one of our members. You know, Mabel Jones lost her dear husband. It was hard. They lived as a wonderful couple. They were a wonderful example of true Christian marriage. So when He passed away, Jean and I went to visit her, and we asked her, “Look, would you want somebody else to introduce the mayor? We know it’s hard.”

And she said, “I will be a poor witness if I mourn like the unbelievers.”

I thank God that she could stand up here and carry out her program, because she has a hope. She has not said goodbye to Mike forever; it is only for a season.

That is the power of the Gospel, the doctrine of justification by faith. So Paul will say in Thessalonians, “We don’t have to mourn like the unbelievers who have no hope.” It gives us the courage to do things that we never could have done. I thank God for such a witness.

3. Justification by faith does not stop there. It goes beyond that. It further teaches that because you have become a child of God, God sends His Holy Spirit to indwell the believer, so that you and I become partakers of the Divine Nature. Why? That we may escape the corruption that is in the world. And by the corruption that is in the world I don’t mean just the cinemas and all the other things. The corruption of the world is in us because our nature is corrupt, and will remain corrupt until the second coming of Christ, when this corruption puts on incorruption. God sends the

Holy Spirit to dwell in us. As Paul will explain in Romans 5, because of this, we are standing under the umbrella of grace. We are standing in grace. Not only do we have peace with God, we have been reconciled to Him, but we have available the power of God through the indwelling Spirit. Which means that now we can live lives that are well pleasing to God. That is the power of justification by faith or the fruits of justification by faith. In other words as Jesus said in John 15:4-5, 7-8:

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ...If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

So please remember that there is a very

important part of justification by faith that we need to realize. And I'll tell you why, but before I do that, let me just give you one more text: Matthew 5:14. Jesus is talking to the Christian believers, the disciples, and He's making a statement. He says:

You [you disciples] are the light of the world....

The word "light" in the original is in the singular; the "you" is in the plural. We are many, but we are one light, because that one light is Jesus Christ. And when Jesus came to this world, He came as a light in darkness. Now Jesus is no longer here; He's back in heaven. But His body, the church, the ecclesia, the called people are here. And Jesus said to us, "You are the light of the world." And then in Matthew 5, verse 16:

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Many of you are older than I, many of you are younger. But when World War II took place, we

were crossing the ocean. My father and mother had taken us to visit relatives in India and we were returning back to Africa in 1939. I was just a kid, and we were all excited. Suddenly one night, in the middle of the ocean, the lights of the ship went out. Pitch darkness. We thought that the generator had burnt out, and then came an announcement on the PA [public address] system, that Germany had declared war against Great Britain, and they had put the lights out so that no German ship would see us.

I remember my dear Mother would take her rosary (we were Roman Catholics) and she would pray furiously that our ship would not be torpedoed. We used to hear on the radio for those next two weeks as we traveled, this ship and that other ship were torpedoed, and they were quite close to us. And we prayed.

When we arrived in Kenya, they made a law that all the houses would have screens so that the light would not go out. The motorcars would have a little shield over the headlights so that the

airplanes could not see the light. And everything was in darkness. But I'll tell you, a Christian who hides his light under a bushel should be ashamed of himself. For Jesus said, what good is a light if you hide it under a bushel? [Matthew 5:15]

So please remember, the gospel is the power of God. But the world doesn't know it, folks, the world doesn't know it. Why? Because it has not seen Jesus Christ in the church.

You know, 50 percent of the world population at one time was under Marxism. Have you ever asked why Christian countries like Russia and the Eastern European block, why did they turn Marxist? One of the main reasons is not the ideology of Marxism, which is appealing. But one of the main reasons is because the church has failed to reveal the power of the Gospel. [Friedrich] Nietzsche, the great pagan philosopher, made this statement to the Christian church, and we need to take it seriously. He was an atheist, a famous philosopher. He said to the Christian church, "If you expect me to believe in your Redeemer, you

Christians will have to look a lot more Redeemed.”

It is only through justification by faith that we can look “redeemed.” It’s the only path.

4. Finally, and this is in connection with number three, justification by faith is able to produce a community of believers, a called people. It doesn’t matter what their numbers are, but it is able to produce a community of people who are so knit together in love that they behave as if they were one person. Now that is a miracle, in a sinful world. Can God produce a people who are so closely knit together that there is no jealousy, there is no bickering, but we are one heart and one mind? The Gospel of Christ can do that. And when that happens, this earth will be lightened with His glory.

I want to close with an example because this is my concern for the Adventist church. As long as we are fighting like cats and dogs, we can never witness the power of the Gospel. So I want to give you, in closing, a text which proves that this did

happen once. It was short lived, because of the perversion of the Gospel. It will happen again, and I want us to be part of it. And my closing text is Acts 4:33-35. Let's start with verse 32 because that's a key statement that's the goal of the gospel and the life of the church. Acts 4:32, listen to this:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. [Have you got it? One heart and one soul.] No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.

I was discussing this with a Russian Marxist in Ethiopia, and I said, "This is true Communism! Your Communism is by compulsion at the point of a gun, this is done by the power of the gospel. You can never produce this by Marxism, one heart-one soul."

Verse 33:

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace [the same power now was manifested]

was upon them all.

Do you know what that means? The resurrection of Christ is the greatest evidence that God has conquered sin. Because, you see, sin takes us to the grave. If you can conquer the grave, you can conquer sin. If you can't conquer the grave, you can't conquer sin, because the ultimate power of sin is the grave. Jesus conquered the grave as the greatest evidence that He conquered sin. And the disciples with great power gave witness to this truth. Acts 4:34-35:

There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Folks, that is the power of the gospel. Can it happen here, in 20th century North America, with all its materialism? The answer is yes! Because Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. And He said this [John 8:32]:

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

May God help us to know the truth, as we study this excellent book, the Epistle to the Romans. May God bless us as we study this book is my prayer in Jesus name.

Chapter 2

The Wrath of God

(Romans 1:18-32)

Now Paul tackles the universal, the total sin problem of mankind, beginning with verse 18 of chapter one, right up to verse 20 of chapter three. It's quite a big chunk that he deals with in regards to the sin problem. And the question we must ask is, "Why?" Why does he begin with the sin problem?

The gospel is God's Good News not for good people, but for sinners. And first of all, he has to convince us that in us there is nothing good. He has to convince us that we, in and of ourselves, are helpless. He has to destroy in us every confidence in the flesh. Because the gospel is not for 80 percent sinners or 90 percent sinners; it is for 100 percent sinners.

So he plunges into the sin problem which we

cannot cover in one study. It's going to take three studies to deal with the sin problem. I want to warn you beforehand that Paul does paint a dark, dismal picture of the human race, to which you and I belong. It can be discouraging. So please don't go home and plan to commit suicide. Because Paul has some wonderful good news beginning with chapter three, verse 21. In fact, he begins the gospel with two words: "But now." After he has painted a dark, dismal picture of us, he says, "But now, don't give up hope. I have good news."

The stars shine the brightest on a night that is pitch dark. And it is only in the light of our total sinfulness that the gospel shines gloriously. So please remember that our next three studies are not pleasant, but something with which we need to come to grips.

Now I would also like to give you a little secret that I have discovered in my study of Pauline epistles: Paul's method of writing is, often, he will make a statement. You need to look for those statements because, once he has made a statement,

he will try to expound on it, or he will explain it, or he will defend it. The statement of our passage today is verse 18. The rest of the chapter, verses 19-32, is simply expounding what he says in verse 18. So we need to understand the statement first before we can understand what he's trying to explain. What does he say in verse 18? He says:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

That's the statement. He begins with the wrath of God. Whenever we read that statement, "wrath of God," it sometimes makes our knees shake. So I need to explain the word. When the Bible talks of God's wrath, we must not equate it with human wrath. It is not some emotional anger or a loss of self-control, where He lashes out on those who are against Him. That is not the Biblical definition of wrath. In fact, this passage is one of the finest definitions of God's wrath.

A lot of people reading the Old Testament

think of God as a God of wrath, ready to bring fire down upon the human race or those who sin. But I would like to explain that God's wrath is not like man's wrath; in fact, James makes that clear. Man's wrath and God's wrath are not the same. So we must never try to understand the wrath of God by our understanding of human wrath.

What then is God's wrath? It is His hatred for sin. God hates sin. Why does He hate sin? I'll tell you why: because He loves us. God cannot love us and love sin at the same time. You know why? Because sin is a killer! Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:56:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

Sin kills. It kills you and me. God hates sin because He loves us. He "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" [John 3:16]. Why did He give His Son? That we may escape that death that sin brings to us.

So the wrath of God is hatred for sin because He loves us. Please keep that in mind. Now there is a problem here because we human beings have difficulty separating sin from the sinner. When somebody does something bad, we look down on the individual. But God makes a distinction between sin and the sinner. He loves the sinner but He hates the sin. And He hates sin because He loves the sinner. We human beings, when we hate sin, we sometimes hate the sinners, too. And that's the tragedy, that's our human problem. So that's number one.

But as you look at the verse you will notice that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against two things, not against one but against two things. We have dealt with one. We have dealt with unrighteousness, which is synonymous with sin. But Paul says that God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness.

That word, "ungodliness," can have two meanings, basically, in the New Testament. For example, it could mean what Paul meant in

Romans 4:5, referring to Abraham, that we are unlike God. Sinners are ungodly in the sense that they are sinners and God is righteous, He's holy. So we are unlike God.

But here Paul is not using the meaning of ungodliness in that sense. The context tells us that what Paul means here is ungodliness in people who deliberately, willfully, persistently want to live without God. He hates that. He hates ungodliness. Why? I'll tell you why. Turn to John 3. Now you are all familiar with verse 16 which says that:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

God doesn't want any of us to perish, so He gave us His Son. In verse 17 He says:

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

And then in verse 18 he goes on to say that those who believe in His Son shall not be condemned, but those who reject His Son already stand condemned:

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

But the verse that I want you to look at is verse 36, at the conclusion of this chapter, John 3:36:

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

You see, there is one sin that God cannot forgive, and that's the sin of unbelief. If you reject the gift of God, then there is no way that God can save you. So, His wrath is against ungodliness because He loves you; He doesn't want you to be lost. We will see this more and more as we go along. So in summary:

1. The wrath of God is His hatred for sin, and He hates sin because He loves us.
2. God's love is hatred for unrighteousness because He knows that the moment that you reject Him, you have rejected life. And He doesn't want that. He hates ungodliness because He cannot save us by our ungodliness.

Having said that, I want you to look at the next thing that is extremely important in verse 18:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

God's wrath, says Paul, has been revealed, against two things:

1. All ungodliness, and
2. The unrighteousness (or wickedness) of men.

I want to emphasize the order in which the

Apostle points his finger at man's problem. You will notice that he puts "ungodliness" first. Then, in his thinking, unrighteousness follows. To him, the big thing, the important thing, is ungodliness. Now this is important for us to realize. Especially today, because the modern approach is that man's real problem is unrighteousness. We read about the terrible things that are taking place in our country, and we say that man's problem is unrighteousness. Ungodliness is hardly mentioned. But unrighteousness is the consequence, unrighteousness is the fruit of ungodliness. So the problem is not unrighteousness, it is ungodliness. When man turns his back to God, the result of that is unrighteousness. So the cause of man's problem is not unrighteousness, the cause of man's problem is ungodliness.

We need to be aware of this because, for the last few decades, unfortunately, the American nation is gradually beginning to turn its back to God. Ever since secular humanism has come in, we have been turning our backs to God. What we have been seeing is unrighteousness. But

unrighteousness is the fruits of this. I will mention this more as we come towards the end.

But I want you to realize that it is not possible to solve man's problems of unrighteousness that we are seeing today by human effort. There are many who are saying today that we need to have more dialogue. These are modern theologians who are saying this. "The world is torn," they say, "it is divided in all kinds of sections — political sections, color divisions, racial, you name it. It is a world of various kinds of curtains — bamboo curtains, iron curtains — and all that man needs is to reconcile man with man." Hardly anything is mentioned in terms of man's relationship to God, which is the heart of the problem.

Sin today is regarded as sickness, a disease which needs to be cured by man. Sin sometimes is looked upon as the remnants of our animal nature: "it is only a question of time, as we develop and progress in life, that we will get rid of this problem." But all the time, as I mentioned, it is man in terms of man, man in relationship to man.

But the problem is not there; the problem is man's relationship to God. This is the key problem and we need to realize that.

So Paul is saying God hates, He detests, His wrath from heaven is revealed, against ungodliness, and its fruit, unrighteousness. Then, having made that statement, you will notice why. It is because man, deliberately, in His sinful state, wants to suppress the truth. Man does not like, says Paul, to retain the knowledge of God because he detests God. We will see that the reason that man does not like to retain the knowledge of God is because man, who is egocentric, does not want to accept the fact that he can do nothing to save himself.

You see, man doesn't like to be a beggar. Man hates to be given a gift when he can't repay it. You have to live in the third world to realize this. They will accept your foreign aid, but they hate you for it. Why? Because you are revealing that they are incapable of helping themselves. That is unpleasant to the human ego. So many Americans

overseas wonder why these third world people do not love them when their country is pouring so much into their country. Well, it's for one reason: because you are revealing that they are beggars. They are incapable of saving themselves. Man doesn't like to think that he can't save himself. He wants to do something towards his salvation. And Jesus says, "Without me you can do nothing!" And that's painful.

How is the ungodliness of man revealed from heaven? First of all, it was revealed in the Bible, in the history of the Old Testament. You will notice that, ever since the fall of man, this has been his tendency: to run away from God. Let me give you some examples.

Adam and Eve before the fall were happy to welcome God; they had communion with Him every day. But when Adam sinned and God came to visit them, what did they do? They ran away from God. And man has since then always been running away from God. Now look at Romans 1:19:

...Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

In other words, if man does not have a knowledge of God, says Paul, it is not because he's ignorant about God, it is because he has deliberately pushed God out of the picture. Man began with a knowledge of God. If he has failed to know God today it's because he does not want to know God. Look at verse 20:

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

In other words, God has revealed Himself to man:

1. in them [i.e., men themselves]; and
2. in nature.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God's image was not totally wiped out. There was still left in Adam and Eve, and in the human race, a desire to seek after God. God said to the first parents, "I will put enmity between Satan and you" [Genesis 3:15].

Besides this, Paul says, "Nature, creation, tell me how on earth can you imagine that this complex, highly refined, highly planned, highly organized world of ours could come about just by chance? By the mixture of gases that suddenly produced life and with the evolutionary urge gradually improved until we became what we are?" Boy, if I take some scrap metals and put them in a bag and shake them for a million years, or for 50 million years, I will not get a Cadillac. All I will get is some polished iron that is worthless. The creation of this world is so highly organized, ... I mean, we boast of our technology, and I am sure that the angels up there are laughing at us. They think, "Wait till they come to heaven and realize what else they have to learn." We will realize that we knew nothing on this earth.

But in spite of everything that God has given in terms of evidence, man does not want to retain the knowledge of God. This is the fundamental problem with sinful man. He thinks he can live without God. What does he do when he turns his back to God? Look at verse 21, first part:

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him ...

So there are two problems now:

1. Not only does man refuse to acknowledge God,
2. He is ungrateful for all that God has done.

Do you know that the moment Adam sinned, legally, he had no right to live one second? Do you know that the moment Adam sinned, he should have died? (By the way, if he had died, we would have died in Him.)

But because God had planned a way of escape, because God from the foundation of the world,

predestined all men to be redeemed in His Son, He kept Adam and Eve alive and allowed them to have children. Why? Not because He hates us, but because He wants us redeemed. God is the source of every blessing that comes in this world. And what do we do? Man is unthankful, He is not only ungodly but he's unthankful. And Paul goes on to say [in the rest of verse 21]:

... but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

When man turns his back to God, when man rejects God, all he is left with is darkness. Man thinks he can live without God, but the answer is, he cannot!

You know, when we were in Ethiopia, the year after we arrived, Ethiopia experienced what is known as the Marxist Revolution. What disturbed me was to see how many Christians, both in the other churches and in our churches (especially the educated Christians), who fell for Marxism. They did not fall for the practise of Communism, they

fell for the ideology.

I said to myself, there must be something attractive. So I began buying books. I bought Karl Marx and Engel's *The Communist Manifesto*, *Das Kapital*, and I began reading ... and it is heavy stuff, very heavy stuff. I realized that the heart of Marxism is that man is able to save himself. The essence of Marxism is "ungodliness"; it is an atheistic philosophy.

This is how Karl Marx put it. He says that the problem is man's selfishness. He admitted that man is selfish. He called it "self-alienation," his term for selfishness. He said that man is selfish, but he said the reason why he is selfish is because of his environment. Of course, by environment, he meant, to a large degree, "capitalism," which was the situation in 19th century Europe. He said, "It is capitalism that has made us greedy. It is capitalism that has taught us that we must live for ourselves. So therefore I have a gospel, not the gospel of Jesus Christ, but my gospel is: change the environment, and man will be redeemed."

Of course, the mechanics of changing the environment is a revolution. The purpose of a revolution is to get into the hands of the people the property and the riches and the wealth of the country. Once they have this in their hands, the second step is to change the environment from capitalism to socialism. Those who have must be forced to share with others who do not have.

So the work of socialism is to confiscate private ownership — the banks, businesses — and make equal distribution. Wonderful! Then Karl Marx states that this is only a transition stage; this is the gospel which will save man from economic and social injustices.

Then he said, once man has learned and been taught how to share, it will become spontaneous. Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? Well, Russia has changed her environment for the last 70 years. I wonder how unselfish the Russians are?

The problem of man is not his environment. It

is his nature. And science cannot change my nature. God can change my sinful heart and give me a heart of the flesh. But man cannot. So every human attempt to save himself (and I say humanism is part of that program) is bound to end with failure, because Jesus made it clear:

Without me, you cannot do anything.

And so Paul is showing here that man has within himself a tendency to turn his back to God. Now how does God react to this? Listen to verses 22-23; what does man do:

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

Now you may say, “We don’t do this today. We are living in sophisticated, educated America. We don’t worship four-footed beasts.” No, you don’t. But we do worship ourselves. Even in the church, it’s becoming a problem. There is

something that is creeping into our church which was introduced by liberal theologians and that is the historical-critical method of interpreting Scripture. It's a big term. What does it mean? It simply means that the human mind becomes the measuring stick of truth. It's a very subtle form of ungodliness. Man must interpret scripture on what is rational to him, what makes sense to him, what is within the framework of human experience.

We cannot use the scientific method to interpret Scripture! This was an inspired Book. It is the Holy Spirit that must enlighten us. But man thinks that he has the solution to all his problems.

What does God do to such people? Does He bring fire and wipe us all out? No. Listen to verse 24. Listen to verse 26. Listen to verse 28. This is their finest description of the wrath of God. You will discover that unlike human wrath, God's wrath is passive. How does God's wrath work? How is it revealed from heaven? Look at Romans 1:24:

Therefore [because man insists on living

without Him, therefore, Paul says] God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

Romans 1:26:

Because of this [because man refuses the blessings of God], God gave them over to shameful lusts [and to uncleanness]. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

Romans 1:28:

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God [Please notice man's problem: he does not want to retain God in his knowledge.], he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

In other words, God says to mankind, "Okay, I have tried and tried to convince you that you cannot live without Me, but you insist that you can. I am not going to force you (God is love). I am

going to let you go. If you think that you can live without me, go ahead and see how wonderful you can make this world.”

What happens when man turns his back on God and lives independent of God? What happens when God draws back His restraining forces? What happens? Unrighteousness becomes rampant.

Paul is not telling us something that happened in his day. This is not simply ancient history. This is the Biblical view of human history. It happened during the flood time. It happened during the history of Israel. It happened in the Christian church since Jesus Christ. This happened in this country.

This country was established on the principle that was stamped on our coins: “In God We Trust.” But a few decades ago, we felt that we don’t need God. So the first thing we did, in the name of separation of church and state, was that there must be no more praying in the schools. In

other words, we were telling our kids, we don't need God. We have science, we have technology, we don't need God. Today, the discussion is going on, that we don't need that inscription on our coins. There are people today, who are fighting to remove that inscription, "In God We Trust" from our quarter. They don't want it any more.

"Yes, our forefathers, those in the depression, they needed God, but we have social security, we have welfare, we have oil, we have technology, we have computers, you press a button and boy...!"

They're telling me today that there is a computer, and I'm looking forward to it, that you can speak to and it types what you speak, with the correct spelling. The only trouble is it's \$15,000 at the moment. So if any of you have \$15,000 to spare, because this African bush preacher does not know how to type. I have to handwrite all my material and my poor wife types it out. Sometimes my secretary does it and she has a hard time understanding my handwriting.

Wonderful inventions! Of course, people forget that science has also invented the monster that can wipe us all out in a few moments. But the trouble is, has technology, has science, improved life in America? Or is crime increasing by leaps and bounds? I don't care how many reformed movements are brought out in this country, I don't care how many legislations, how many mitigations of justice we instill in our system. As long as we turn our backs to God, there is no solution.

Now what does God do? He says, "Okay, you don't want to live with me. Go ahead." And man begins to live without God, and things get worse and worse. They try everything under the sun to solve their problems. They try education, they try dialogue. They try increasing the budget to stop drugs in this country. And everything is failing. God is waiting until we raise up our hands and say, "God, we can't do it."

When my son was young, we were about ready to go to Sabbath school. He was just a kid, three years old I think. My wife said to me, "Could you

tie his shoelaces?”

I went up to him and I said, “Let me tie your shoelaces.” He looked at me and said, “I can do it!”

I could have used my authority, because we were getting late for Sabbath school, but I thought, no, I’ll let him do it. So I stood back. He tried and he tried. It looked so easy when Daddy tied his shoelaces. He looked up to see if I was going, but I wasn’t, and I think he was telling me, “Why don’t you go away?” But I waited there, and he tried and tried. Finally, he looked up to me and said, “Daddy, you do it.”

We are God’s children, and God is extremely patient with us. He lets us have our own way. He says, “You think you can live without me? Go ahead.” He allows us to make a mess of our lives. He allows us to make a mess of our country and our community, of our marriages and everything else, until we come to the end of our resources and say, “God, please, you take over.”

He doesn't say, "I told you so. Now you can wallow in your mess." He doesn't do that. He says, "I will accept you with open arms."

America is heading in that direction. America is about to reach the end of her resources. When our social security collapses, and when our resources collapse, and when every attempt to solve the problems collapses, and we turn back to God, He will not reject us. America will be ready to hear the gospel again. And who will preach the gospel to them? It is you and I.

But before we can do it, we must realize and reach the position that Paul reached himself. Paul was a Pharisee. He had attained quite some success in his life. Read Philippians 3, verses 4 to 6: he was a pure-blooded Jew, he was circumcised the eighth day, he was zealous for God. Regarding the righteousness of the law he was blameless. Until God opened his eyes and sin revived and he realized that he deserved death. Then he was willing to count all things but loss for Jesus Christ.

The question is, “Have you lost all confidence in yourself?” Have you realized that your only hope is in Jesus Christ and His Righteousness? That is the purpose of exposing us to our problem. We don’t have to learn the hard way. The word of God says that God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against ungodliness and unrighteousness. I don’t have to go through the process to learn it. The word of God tells me that. So why are we waiting to learn the hard way? Let us realize now that our faith looks not at ourselves, but on Jesus Christ, and His Righteousness.

May each one of us realize that God’s wrath is against ungodliness and unrighteousness because He loves you, not because He’s angry with you. He wants you to turn back to Him. He wants you to accept Him as the only Source of hope and of salvation and of Righteousness. Whether it is in terms of your standing before God or whether it is in terms of Christian living, the formula is always the same: “Not I, but Christ.”

And I'll tell you, folks, the "not I" is the hardest part. That is why Paul spends verse 18 right up to chapter 3 verse 20 on the sin problem. He wants to establish in our hearts that the gospel is "not I, but Christ." And may we learn this lesson.

Chapter 3

The Sin of Self-Righteousness

(Romans 2:1-3:8)

I want you to imagine that you are sitting in the church of Rome when the epistle to the Romans is first read. An elder or a scribe or leader has been reading chapter one, verse 18 up to verse 32. While this passage is being read — where Paul describes the wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man and the terrible things that men are doing because they have turned their backs to God — you notice that a group of Christians sitting on one side, these are Jewish Christians, are nodding their heads and whispering to one another, “This Paul surely has hit the nail on the head. We have always known that these Gentiles are rebellious and sinful.”

Suddenly the reader turns to chapter 2 and these Jewish Christians prick up their ears, because this is what they hear in chapter 2:1-4:

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

And the Jews began to say to themselves, "Surely he is not talking about us. We are Jews. How can he talk about us like that? Surely he must mean somebody else."

And the scribe is reading on and he comes to verse 17:

Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to

God....

Paul says, “Yes indeed, I am talking to you Jews. Indeed you are called a Jew and you trust in the Lord and you make your boast of God...,” and he goes on and on.

You see, Paul has been describing the Gentile world in chapter 1, and he has given us a terrible picture of death. They are ungodly, they have deliberately suppressed the truth about God, they have made their own gods, they are worshipping themselves and their ideas, and they are living in sin. And now, suddenly, he changes from the Gentiles to the Jews.

Why does he make this distinction? It is because the Jews were in a very special position. You see, the Gentiles did have a knowledge of God, but it was an implicit knowledge of God: it was a knowledge of God that was revealed to them through nature and through their inner conviction.

The Jews, over and above this, had the direct

revelation of God. As Paul mentioned in chapter 3, verse 2:

...First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.

God had revealed Himself to them through His law, through Moses, and through the other prophets — revealed Himself in a very special and explicit way.

The tragedy was that the Jews were relying on this. They felt, because God had given them this special position, that they were very special people. They felt, because they had the law in this explicit form, that they were better off than the Gentiles. They felt that these things, in and of themselves, made them acceptable to God. But they were ignorant. They were ignorant of the fact that these things did not make them special before God.

Before we discuss the Jews, I would like to say something here that is meaningful to us because you may get the impression that he is discussing

the Jews. You see, when we dealt last study with the Gentile world, we applied it to our nation because, today, America is turning her back to God and we have seen terrible things happen because of ungodliness.

But now I want to get a little bit closer. I believe that what Paul is saying to the Jews has a tremendous application to us as a people. I'll tell you why, because we have a very similar position to the Jews. To us, God has given some wonderful truths. He has restored the law to us. We have the genuine Sabbath. We have a clearer understanding of the cross; we understand about the state of the dead. So, God has given us some wonderful truth. He has given us the Spirit of Prophecy, a lesser light to lead us to the greater light. And we are in the same danger as the Jews, of relying on these things.

We have committed the same mistake, folks. We have looked down upon the other Christians as if they were inferior Christians. We look upon them and say that they don't have the Sabbath, we

have it. We have the truth; they are Philistines. They are Babylonians, they are confused. We have the truth. But the Jews had the same problem and we need to learn what Paul is trying to say about them.

Please remember, Paul was a Pharisee himself, once. He knows what he is talking about and he is being honest and we need to face the issue honestly. What was the problem of the Jews? Where did they go wrong? Can we learn lessons from their mistakes? I read in I Corinthians 10, verse 11 that:

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

What was their problem? What were they ignorant about? I would like to touch three areas.

Number one, the Jews were ignorant about the fact that the mere possession of truth, the mere knowledge of the law do not in and of themselves

make them righteous and acceptable before God. The fact that you know the law doesn't improve your situation. In fact, if you break the law of a country and you are brought before a judge, and you tell the judge, "Look, why are you accusing me? I knew the law." The judge will say, "The fact that you knew the law puts you in a worse position because you knew better!"

So the fact that the Jews knew the law did not make them better. Please notice where Paul touches the heart of the problem. Look at chapter 2, verse 13. Paul says there that:

For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

If you want to be saved by the law, it is not enough to say, "I know the law." It is not enough to say, "I have the law in its explicit form." You have to perform that law. You have to do it in every detail. Paul repeats the same thing when he discusses the Jews in chapter 10 of Romans. In

Chapter 10, verse 5, he says:

Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: “The man who does these things will live by them.”

In other words, the law comes to you and says, “If you want to live, you must obey me.” A knowledge of the truth, a knowledge of the law, does not save anybody.

But the Jews had this tragedy. The tragedy was they thought that because they possessed this law that they were better than the Gentiles. They would look at the Gentiles and they would say, “Well, these Gentiles, they do not know the law of God. They don’t even know the true God. We have that truth. They are outside the covenant of God; they are dogs. They are hopelessly lost. We have the truth.” This is how they boasted. Look at verse 17-20:

Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law [that is, your knowledge of the law] and

brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth....

But Paul says in verses 21-23:

...You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?

He ends up by saying in verse 24 a quotation from Ezekiel 36:22:

As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

It is not enough to say that we have the truth.

The question is, has the truth set you free? It is no use boasting about your knowledge of the truth of the law of God because Paul is saying that, while you are boasting, you are doing the same thing as the Gentiles.

Now, they may not be doing things openly. You know, a legalist tends to do things underhandedly. I want to tell you a little experience. The other day I was at the supermarket and I said to myself, “Thanksgiving is approaching and it’s about time I bought my dog a nice, juicy bone.” So I went to the meat section and I looked around to see if there were any Adventists. I got a nice, juicy bone and I held it under my arm and I went to the counter and a few days later one of the members of the church came up to me and said, “What were you doing with that bone under your arm?”

We human beings are, by nature, legalists. We want to hide. These Jews openly they were not doing things. They were very holy people, because I read Matthew 23:5:

Everything they do is done for men to see.

But all the things they did were to show other people how good they were, but inside they were full of rotten bones, and I don't mean dog bones either. Matthew 23:27-28:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

It is simply not enough to know the truth. The fact that God has given us extra light doesn't make us better.

Problem #2: The Jews felt that keeping the law to the best of their ability or keeping the majority of the law was sufficient. They failed to see what James says in chapter 2, verse 10:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

The law is a unit and, if you fail on one point only, you have come under the condemnation of the law.

I remember an elder in Africa who told me, “You know, Pastor, I have overcome most sins and I am living a good life but I have one or two problems that I am still struggling with. But surely God cannot bring that against me when he compares it to all the good things I am doing.”

I said, “Brother, if you are depending on the law, even if you break on one small point, you are finished.” I gave him the illustration of Matthew 19:16-22:

A young man comes to Jesus and says, “What good thing must I do to earn eternal life?”

And Jesus said, “If you want to go to heaven by your deeds, there is the law that is the definition of righteousness.”

And he said, “Well, Jesus, I want you to know that, ever since I was in primary sabbath school, I have been keeping that law.”

And Jesus said, “Really? Let me test you.” And, when he failed, he had to go home sorrowfully.

If you break the law on one point, that’s all, you are finished if you are depending on the law for your salvation. The law is rigid. It demands perfect obedience on every point. Galatians 3, verse 10:

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

So, #2, the Jews went wrong, they were

ignorant of the fact that they had to keep the law in every detail if they were to be saved by the law.

But point #3, which is an extremely important point: the Jews were correct, the Jews were experts, only in the letter of the law. They had failed to see that the law demands obedience in the heart, in the spirit. The Jew, the Pharisee would stand up and say to the people, “I have never murdered anybody.”

Jesus, in Matthew 5, verse 21 onward, says: “One moment, if you hate somebody in your heart without a cause, you have committed murder in the eyes of the law.” And remember, when Jesus spoke that sermon on the mount, the Jews were already planning to murder the Son of God. It is not a question of simply regarding the letter. Paul himself was a victim to Judaism. But in Romans 7:7 he says:

...Indeed, I would not have know what sin was except through the law. For I would not have know what coveting really was if the law had not

said, “Do not covet.”

Please notice this: it has nothing to do with an act. We tend to define sin as an act but God doesn't look only at the act, He looks at our motives. And I will say right now, here, folks, that anyone who plans to go Ingathering that they may have a star in their crown, are sinning because the motive is wrong even though acts are wonderful. Look at verse 2:16:

This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

In the day of judgment, says Paul, God will judge the secrets of men. It is not enough to obey the law outwardly. I'll tell you what the Jews did. God gave them the law. Now, what is the law? The law is a revelation of His character. Therefore, for you to produce the character of God, you have to be God yourself. That is why it was always God's purpose to dwell in people and to reflect His character through us.

But the moment that you try to keep the law of God in your own strength, you have to do what the Jews did. They took the holy law of God, as holy as God himself, and they brought it down to the level of men by rules, by do's and dont's, and by keeping those rules they thought they were keeping the law.

We do the same thing, folks. The only difference is that in each country the Adventists have their own rules. In America we have our rules, in Scandinavia we have our rules, in Africa we have our rules, and, when we meet together, that's when the problem comes because the rules don't agree.

My dear people, if you are thinking of how much you will sell your car for tomorrow, someone is coming to see it to buy your car, and if you are thinking right now, "How much am I going to sell the car for?" even though you are physically in the church right now, you are breaking the Sabbath.

And, young boys, if you are thinking about why your girlfriend hasn't written to you, you are breaking the Sabbath. Because the law doesn't demand only perfect acts but perfect motives. This was the greatest mistake of the Jews. Romans chapter 2, verses 28 and 29:

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code [in the spirit, not in the letter]. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

The Jews were doing all kinds of wonderful, good things that they may be praised of men. But the true Christian is one whose praise is not of men but of God, who is keeping the law, not in the letter, but in the spirit.

I want to make it clear that it is impossible for you and me to keep the law in the spirit without first accepting the Gospel. Let me give you a text.

Since we are in Romans, Romans chapter 7 and verse 6. Listen to what Paul is saying here:

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we [that is, the believers] have been released from the law [from legalism, from under the jurisdiction of the law] so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

You see, legalism and self-righteousness are an outward religion and Paul demolishes the platform on which the Jews, who were depending on law-keeping, stand.

There was something else that the Jews were depending on. They were depending also on circumcision. Paul says in verse 25 of chapter 2:

Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.

In other words, if you have turned to circumcision as a means of salvation, you must

keep all of the law and please remember that, to the Jew, there was not that much of a distinction between ceremonial and moral law. We make that distinction; the Jews did not. To them the Torah — all of the five books and the requirements in the five books of Moses — were part of the law and they believed that they must keep that in every detail.

But Paul says, if you are depending on circumcision for your ticket to heaven, for your acceptance before God, may I warn you that you are under obligation to keep every other law to be saved.

Paul demolishes the same thing today, if you are depending on certain things that you have done. If you are depending on the fact that you were baptized by immersion, please don't look down upon those Christians who were baptized by sprinkling and say, "They know nothing about baptism, I am the one who was baptized by immersion." Folks, that won't help you.

These things are good if you have a right relationship with Christ, but without that, they are useless. Don't think that because your name is in the books of the Adventist Church that it qualifies you for heaven. Don't think that because your parents or your great grandparents were pillars of the church, maybe even having been pioneers [of the Adventist faith], that it will save you.

I remember one day when I was in the New Gallery Centre in London, a young man came up and he wanted somebody in our group to show him around. He said, "By the way, I want you to know that I am from the General Conference" [the World Headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church].

I said to him, "So what? Does that give you any special privilege?" And he was taken back. I wasn't working there; my wife was. She was the bible instructor. I was having a little bit of fun and later on I discovered that he was a janitor in the General Conference. I would have given him a special privilege, but I thought that he was

demanding attention because he was from the G.C.

I don't care where you come from — your father, your parents may have been pioneers — that doesn't give you a special place in God's kingdom. God is no respecter of persons and that is what Paul is explaining to the Jews in verse 5 onwards. Look at Romans 2:14-15 for example:

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

In other words, “there are Gentiles there who are closer to God than you Jews are,” and that was devastating.

I suppose, by the time the reader was reading chapter 2, verse 14 onward, if Paul was there, they would have lynched him because they did it in the

books of Acts. They grabbed him. “This is the man who is against our people!”

No, what Paul is doing is destroying every confidence that men have, Jew or Gentile, in themselves. Because he cannot give the gospel unless he has destroyed that confidence. I remember preaching at a series of meetings at a Pentecostal church in Addis Abbaba [Ethiopia] and one day the pastor said to me, “Why don’t you preach on the Sabbath?”

So I gave them full studies, and do you know, the whole church turned to Sabbath-keeping. They call themselves Seventh-day Pentecostals. One day, the pastor came to our church in Addis Abbaba to hear me preach and the sabbath school secretary of our union turned to him and said, “I hear you people are keeping the Sabbath.” They had 800 members in their church.

The pastor said, “Yes.”

The secretary said, “Why did you change your

name? All you had to do was join our church. We keep the Sabbath.”

The pastor replied, “I hate to say this, but I am going to be honest. When you Adventists learn how to love and be warm to other Christians, we will join you.”

So, that was a slap in the face.

But folks, we boast that we keep the law of God because we love Jesus. Are we really loving Jesus? For if we love Jesus we will love our neighbors. Are we making the same mistake as the Jews? Are we blaspheming the name of God? Look at Romans 2:26:

If those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?

See, God is looking at the heart of people. Are we right inside? As long as we have outward conformity, that means nothing to God.

Now what is Paul trying to say here? Can you imagine what the Jews were thinking by the time that chapter 2 was read? Does Paul mean that there was no advantage to being a Jew? Is there no advantage in being a Seventh-day Adventist? The answer is in verse 1 of chapter 3 of Romans:

What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.

God gave the Jews the truth as it is in Christ. He gave them the truth to lead them to Christ. What was wrong with the Jews? They took the truth and they perverted it. They made the law the means of salvation. Instead of the law showing them their total depravity so that they may go to Christ for salvation, they made the law their salvation. My dear people, we have the truth, but has the truth led us to a closer walk with Jesus Christ? That's the question.

I want to remind you in closing that Paul has a purpose in dealing with the sin problem, both with the Gentiles and with the Jews. The purpose of this passage, up to chapter 3, verse 20, is to destroy in every human being, confidence in yourself, in your ability, in your origin, in everything that you rely on, that you may accept nothing else but Jesus Christ as your hope and as your righteousness. In other words, Paul is saying, “I don’t care if you are Jew or if you are a Gentile. The whole world is under sin. The whole world is a slave to sin. The whole world is controlled by sin and, therefore, by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

Let me put it this way, the formula of the gospel, as I have mentioned before and I repeat again today, is: “Not I, but Christ.” The hardest part of the formula is the first part, “Not I.” That is the purpose of this first section of Romans. Paul paints a gloomy, dismal picture of not only the Gentile world, but of his own people, the Jews. It doesn’t matter if you are in the church or you are out of the church, we are 100 percent sinners and, once we are convinced of that, we will stop

pointing fingers at each other. You see, if I think of myself as 80 percent a sinner and you are 100 percent a sinner, I can point my finger at you because I am 20 percent better than you. But if we all are 100 percent sinners, we all belong to the same camp and together we will turn to Jesus Christ and his gospel as our only hope.

In concluding, I want to give you a text which is Paul's burden in this passage. Philippians 3:3, and this is the purpose of this passage, so please don't get discouraged. As I mentioned last Sabbath, Paul has to destroy your confidence in yourself before he can say, "But now I have good news." You see, Christ did not come to save good people, he didn't even come to save 99 percent sinners, but he came to save only 100 percent sinners and we must reach that point before the gospel can become fully effective in our lives. Here is Paul's true application of circumcision, here is what it means to worship God in the spirit (Philippians 3:3):

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who

worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus...

To worship God in the spirit means to rejoice in Christ Jesus. That's not difficult if the other half is already reached. And here it is:

...and who put no confidence in the flesh....

Please notice that “Not I, but Christ.” When you have no confidence in the flesh, then you and I are ready for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there is one more study — Romans 3:9-20 — where Paul summarizes and concludes the universal sin problem. I realize it's a dark, dismal, hopeless picture, but there is good news ahead and Paul is simply preparing us for that good news. I pray that you will not be among those who will feel insulted by what Paul is writing about the human race — about you and me — but that you will agree with Paul: “Paul, you are dead right, we are sinners. Our hope is in Jesus Christ and His righteousness alone.”

May God help us to realize our total depravity, that in and apart from the grace of God we are incapable of doing one bit of righteousness in the spirit. We may be doing it in the letter, but not in the spirit.

May God help us to take what Paul is saying about the Jews and apply to us, and say, “Paul, thank you for opening our eyes. We recognize that there is nothing good in us. Thank you, so that we may accept the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

May God help us that we shall know this truth and the truth will make us free. Amen.

Chapter 4

Universal Sin and Guilt

(Romans 3:9-20)

Imagine Paul's epistle to the Romans being read to the church of Rome for the first time. In chapter one, Paul describes the wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness and the unrighteousness of man. The Jewish Christians would have assumed he was speaking about the Gentiles. Then, in chapter 2, he speaks to the Jews and says, "You Jews are no better than the Gentiles. Even though you have an advantage, you have the oracles of God, the fact that you have the knowledge of the law has not made you any better. You are all sinners."

Then, in chapter 3, verses 9 to 20, he brings this whole matter to a conclusion. It is important that we understand this, because what Paul is describing here in this first section of Romans is not just ancient history. It is true of the world in

which we are living.

Recently, a survey was made by a company called Frank Magid Associates concerning the attitudes [in the U.S.A.] towards religion and religious things. This survey was made in three mega-cities in this country: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Des Moines, Iowa; and Seattle, Washington. I want you to listen to what their conclusion was.

In Seattle, only about a third are currently affiliated with a church. Only one-third of the residents of Seattle feel a need for God. Instead, most in Seattle believe “that humans can live good and proper lives without a formal religious structure.” (They need to read Romans 1, verse 18 to chapter 3.) These participants feel that, through proper human interaction and communication with nature, people can lead full and morally upright lives. “We don’t need a God” — that’s our modern world, folks. “We can live good, moral, upright lives.” Is that true? Let’s see what the Bible says.

This section of Romans 3:9-20 is extremely important, as I have already said. What I am going to do is look at it in a general way first and then we are going to look at it in detail, because when we come to grips with this passage, then and then only, are we ready for the gospel. It is no use coming to Christ as you are unless you learn what Paul is saying here: that from head to foot there is nothing good in us; that salvation is entirely a gift from our Lord Jesus Christ. Okay, let's look at verse 9:

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better?

“Are we Jews” (which is what we discussed in chapter 2 and the first half of chapter 3) “better than they?” (the Gentiles which we discussed in chapter 1, verse 18 to the end of the chapter). And what is his answer?

Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.

Then, to defend this conclusion, he puts

together a string of quotations from the old testament. He does not quote them in detail; you need to look at what the Bible teaches regarding man, whether you are a Jew or a Gentile.

Verses 10-12 are a quotation from Psalms 14:1-3 and Psalms 53:1-3 (which are virtually identical):

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, and their ways are vile; there is no one who does good. God looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Verse 12 ends with a quotation from Ecclesiastes 7:20:

There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

The first half of verse 13 is a quotation from Psalms 5:9:

Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with destruction. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongue they speak deceit.

The second half of verse 13 is taken from from Psalms 140:3:

They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's; the poison of vipers is on their lips.

Verse 14 is a quotation from Psalms 10:7:

His mouth is full of curses and lies and threats; trouble and evil are under his tongue.

Verses 15-17 are taken from two passages in the old testament. First is Proverbs 1:16:

...For their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood.

The second is from Isaiah 59:7,8:

Their feet rush into sin; they are swift to shed innocent blood. Their thoughts are evil thoughts; ruin and destruction mark their ways. The way of peace they do not know; there is no justice in their paths. They have turned them into crooked roads; no one who walks in them will know peace.

Finally, in verse 18, Paul concludes with Psalms 36:1:

An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes.

All these quotations from the old testament are saying basically the same thing. Verse 10 is saying, “There is none righteous, not even one.” Verse 12, “There is none that does good, not even one.” Then he concludes with those very crucial words in verses 19 and 20:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held

accountable to God.

Not a single human being will ever make it to heaven — whether you are a Gentile or a Jew — not a single human being will make it to heaven by his own good works. No way. Every human being will be in heaven because of Jesus Christ. Verse 20:

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Now, what is Paul telling us in this conclusion? Let's look now at this passage in detail. Romans 3:9:

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.

Are the Jews better than the Gentiles? Now, why does Paul make a distinction between Jews

and Gentiles? Well, as we saw in the last two studies, the Gentiles had a knowledge of the law, but that knowledge was not in an explicit form. They had it in their conscience. Look at chapter 2, verses 14 and 15:

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law [that is, in the written form], do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

In other words, God has implanted into the heart of every human being a knowledge of the law, in other words, a knowledge of what is right and what is wrong.

Now, I need to pause here and make a little distinction because if you take chapter 2 and verse 15 and then you go to chapter 8 of Hebrews, verse 10, you might be confused. There it talking of the

new covenant:

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

It sounds as if the two are the same and so I need to clarify the issue.

What Paul is saying in Romans 2:15 is very different from what he is mentioning in Hebrews 8:10. When the Bible teaches that, in the new covenant, God writes the law in our hearts, it is very different than writing the law in the hearts of the unbeliever and the pagans. You see, in the pagans, he has put in the conscience a knowledge of what is right and what is wrong, so that even in the most primitive societies they know, they have an idea of, what is right and what is wrong. That's writing the law in the conscience.

But in the new covenant, when He writes the

law in the heart, He doesn't tattoo those rules in your heart. What He does is put the love of God in your heart, which makes the keeping of the law possible.

So, these are two different things. In the new covenant, which is only affecting the believer, God puts His agape love in the heart. As we shall discover when we come to Romans 13 onward, that love is the fulfilment of the law. So please don't confuse the new covenant law written on the heart which is the love of God poured into the heart of the believer and what Paul is talking about concerning the Gentiles in Romans 2:14,15.

Paul is saying that the Gentiles have a knowledge of the law, yet not explicit knowledge but in their conscience. They know what is right and what is wrong. But the Jew, over and above this, has an advantage. God has given them an explicit knowledge of the law in a written form and this should have been an advantage to the Jews.

But did the Jews learn from their knowledge?

The answer is no. Instead of the law doing its job and, therefore, bringing to the Jews the blessing of salvation in Jesus Christ, they thought they knew everything about the law when they were totally ignorant about the law, as we saw in the last study.

We need to keep this in mind because we are in the same position because of the doctrine of dispensationalism which came to the Christian church about the 19th Century. This doctrine has done away with the law and God, in His mercy, has restored the law to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But the question is: “Has the law done its job in our people, or are we in the same boat as the Jews? Have we become a very proud, self-righteous people and do we look down upon the other Christians as Philistines and as Babylonians, and we are the ones who have the truth?”

So we must pay attention to what Paul is saying here. He is saying there is no distinction. Yes, there is a distinction in that the Jew has the knowledge of the law in an explicit form, but, ultimately, there is no distinction, for both Jews

and Gentiles are under sin.

That is the next point I would like to bring to your attention, for we have previously proved or charged that both Jews and Gentiles (or “Greeks”) are all under sin. Now what does he mean by the phrase “under sin”? It’s not a phrase that we use in modern English. It’s a phrase that was commonly used in the slave society. A slave was always “under” his master. The word “under” means to be ruled by or to be dominated by. What Paul is saying here is that he has proved that mankind, whether Gentile or Jew, is ruled by sin. As he brings out later in Romans 7:14, he says:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

We are, by nature, slaves to sin and Paul has proven that and now he is presenting that as a fact. Then, to buttress his conclusion, he gives this long string of statements from the Old Testament that I mentioned above.

What is he doing here? He is doing what is commonly known as the “proof text method.” He is putting a string of statements from the Old Testament into one passage and we called it the proof text method. I get from this passage that it is not wrong to use the proof text method, but it does become wrong when we misuse a text. Whenever we use the proof text method, folks, please be honest with the context; otherwise, you can make the Bible say anything you want. So there is nothing wrong with the proof text method; what is wrong is when we misuse that method and I am afraid we are guilty too often of it.

So here, Paul, using the proof text method, proves that none is righteous, no not one. There is none who understands true righteousness, not even one. There is none who seeks after God, because man, by nature, is anti-God.

“The Gentiles, even though they had the knowledge of God through nature, refused to acknowledge God,” says Paul in chapter 1, verse 21.

The Jews have the knowledge of God, but they are doing precisely the same thing. You look at the history of the Jews. He revealed Himself in a most wonderful way, yet what did they do? They turned their backs to Yahweh and they went after false gods, after idol worship, and God had to do all kinds of things to correct them, including the Babylonian captivity.

There is in man a trend to go away from God and we are seeing the trend today. We are seeing it everywhere. Even in our church there are people who are feeling we do not need God any more. But, folks, we need to come to a conclusion that apart from God there is no salvation. Apart from Jesus Christ, man is incapable of saving himself and we need to face this issue.

Romans 3:12:

All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.

In other words, they have become independent. “They are living without me. They think they can exist without me. They have altogether become unprofitable. There is none who does good, not even one.” And he goes on and on describing the condition of man by nature.

Then in Romans 3, verse 19, he says:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Paul is saying that the whole world is under the law. So there are two things that we are under. Please notice that there are two places in this passage where Paul uses the word “under.” In verse 9, we are “under sin.” In verse 19, we are “under the law.” The Gentile is under the law, the Jew is under the law, because both have the knowledge of the law.

It's true that the one has an implicit knowledge of the law through his conscience, the other one has a direct, explicit knowledge of the law through the revelation of God at Mount Sinai. But when you come down to the bottom line, folks — to use an American expression, “where the rubber meets the road,” — has the Gentile obeyed his conscience in every detail? The answer is no. Has the Jew obeyed the law in every detail? The answer is no. Therefore, both Jew and Gentile, who are under the law whether you have it in an explicit form or an implicit form, both Jew and Gentile are all guilty before God and that includes you and that includes me.

I want to ask you a question. Has the law silenced your mouth? That's the work of the law: has it silenced your mouth? The self-righteous man, whether he is a believer or unbeliever, stands up and says, “Well, there is something good in me. All I need is a proper interaction with human beings. All I need is to educate the people.”

Or as the Marxist philosophy says, “All we

need is to teach people to share through socialism, by compulsion, and then they will automatically share.”

Has the law silenced you, folks, because I’ll tell you, you cannot go to verse 21 where Paul introduces the gospel unless, first of all, the law has silenced your mouth.

Paul is very clear that the gospel is not for good people. The gospel is not for people who are half-good or who are doing their best. The gospel is for people who realize their total depravity, that they cannot produce one iota of genuine righteousness which has not been motivated by self. Impossible, folks. Has the law silenced you? That is the question I want to ask this morning. If it hasn’t, then we are wasting our time next study going to verse 21.

Paul is very forthright: the law must stop our talking. The Jew who stood up and said, “I thank God I am not like that publican,” will never accept the gospel. The gospel is a stumbling stone to him

because his prayer is, “Thank God I am a good man. I pay my tithe and I come to church.”

I don't care whether you are coming to church, the question is: what about you? What are your thoughts about? You young men, if you are thinking about your girlfriend, you are breaking the Sabbath whether you are in church or not. And you old men, if you are thinking about business tomorrow, how much you will sell your car for on Sunday, you are breaking the Sabbath. Folks, have we kept the law? **NOBODY** thus far has kept the law. Therefore, in view of this, Paul says that by the deeds of the law no one can make it to heaven. Not even one.

Now I want to pause here and ask the question: why did God give the Jews the law? I mean, over and above the consciences they had, why did God take time to sidetrack from His trip to Israel? If you look at a map of the Middle East, you wonder if God knows His geography because He took the wrong route. He did not go straight from Egypt to the promised land. He took them southeast

towards Mount Sinai, there in those barren mountains.

I'm talking from experience. Have you ever been to Mount Sinai? The brethren in Egypt took me there as a treat when I had a seminar with them. I said that I wished they could take me to Mount Zion, but they couldn't because Zion is in Israel and Egypt belongs to the Arab world, so they could only take me to Mount Sinai. All I saw was rocks and boulders and I had to climb it. I'm only thankful for the monk who spent thirty years carving out steps on that mountain so it would be easy for me to climb it and easy for him, he thought, to go to heaven, because he was working his way to heaven and all he did was reach the top of the mountain. The law does not produce righteousness; it gives you the knowledge of sin.

Why Did God Give the Law?

So, why did God give the law? It's a question we must answer, because God has restored the law in this church. Why? And I would like to give you

three answers.

1. The first answer is negative. **God never gave the law as a means of salvation.** Never. Nowhere will you find in scripture that God gave the law as a means of salvation. He gave the law so that we may have the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:20:

Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

God never gave the law as a means of salvation. This is the false teaching of dispensationalism. You see, the dispensationalists teach that God tried the law from Moses to Christ and, because it failed, He introduced grace. These are the people who divide the bible into sections or dispensations. They fail to realize that the bible is a unit and that there is only one way that man is saved, from Adam to the last person. It is through the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ. There are not one, two, or three ways of salvation. There is only

one way that genuinely saves man: it is through the gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ. That is what we must be clear on; the law was never given to save us. If you want to add another text, look at Galatians 2:16, where Paul says the same thing as Romans 3:20:

...Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

I would like to add to that #1 something that too often too many Adventists are guilty of: neither was the law given to Christians to maintain their salvation in Christ. God doesn't come to the believer and say, "Now I have forgiven you, but you must keep the law, otherwise you have had it." Nowhere in the bible will you find this teaching.

So, number one, God never gave the law as a means of salvation and God never gave the law to

retain our salvation in Christ. Then why did He give the law, or, to ask the question that Paul does in Galatians 3:17-25, why did God give the law 430 years after he promised salvation to Abraham and his seed, as a gift? Why? It was never for salvation and never to maintain salvation. Then, why? Now we go to the positive answer.

2. The law was given that we may have the knowledge of sin. You see, sin is a deceiver. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that:

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

The heart is deceitful, so God has to expose sin. He has to reveal what sin is. He has to tell the self-righteous man that, if you want to know the true definition of righteousness and of sin, look at my law.

Paul knows this from his own experience. You see, Paul was raised up as a Jew with the idea that you can save yourself by keeping the law. He had

not fully understood the meaning of the law even though he had the knowledge of the written law. And then in chapter 7, verse 9 of Romans, Paul says:

Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died.

He's saying, "When the law came to me, when I really understood the meaning of the law, sin revived and I died and the law which I was told and taught to be the means of salvation became the means of my death."

In other words, "I realized that when I have fully understood the law, it tells me that I am a sinner."

Let me put it this way. If you talk to pagans, to people who have never known the law of God, they will define sin only in terms of an act. The Jews made the same mistake. As long as you do not perform the act, you are not a sinner. The Jews took the law of God and they reduced it to rules

that human beings could keep and they kept those rules and thought they were keeping the law of God. But Paul says [in Romans 7:7],

...Indeed, I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known was coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”

And coveting has nothing to do with an act. It is a cherished desire. Paul realized that, the moment he cherished a sinful desire, he had already sinned. This is what Jesus clearly taught in Matthew 5; we covered that in the last study.

But this is so important to Paul that he repeats this in Romans several times. Let me give you some examples. In Romans 5, he comes back to it in verse 20. Why did the Lord enter into the promise? Why did God give the law? And the answer is:

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased

all the more....

God never gave the law to solve the sin problem, but that sin may abound. And then, in chapter 7, verses 7-9 he said the same thing. So, #2, God gave the law that we may have the knowledge of what sin is in God's eyes. It's more than an act. If you hate somebody without a cause, you are a murderer. If you look at a woman to lust, even if you don't commit the act, you have already committed adultery in God's eyes and, in that case, there is no hope.

The whole world is guilty. In others words, do you realize what Paul is saying in Romans 3:17: that every one of us, without exception, belongs to death row. That's where we belong by nature and the only way we can escape is — not by pleading to the Supreme Court, that won't help — the only way we can escape is by Jesus Christ.

3. Now we come to the third reason, which is to me a very important reason and that is really explained in Romans 7:13 and 14. But let me give

you the third purpose of the law: **God gave the law to bring sin out of its hiding place.**

You see, right deep inside you is sin. I have friends of about nine years in England. In England, people do not have showers every day because water is expensive there. It's an overcrowded island and they have what we call "spit baths" and maybe a tub bath once a week; they don't like showers. I came to America and water is very freely obtainable here and they have showers every day. So, in America, they don't have to use too much perfume. In Europe, the ladies use much stronger perfume than here because they have to camouflage.

But, folks, all you are doing is covering up outwardly the inside rottenness of man. What the law does is open up the eyes and shows you what you are like inside. The Jews were very particular about washing their hands before their meals and Jesus says, you may have no idea that the outside may be clean but the inside is full of rotten bones, putrefying souls and all kinds of things. Please

turn to Romans 7. Look at verses 13 and 14.

Did that which is good, then, become death to me? [Is the law responsible for my death?] By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that, through the commandment, sin might become utterly sinful.

Has the law opened up the lid of your own respectability and has the law shown you that you are exceedingly sinful so that you can say with Paul what he says in verse 14 of Romans 7:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

Or in Romans 7, verse 18:

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Not anything good dwells in me. Has the law

exposed your exceeding sinfulness? If it hasn't, you will still be saying: "I'm bad, but I'm not that bad." No, folks, you are that bad and so am I. Our only hope is Jesus Christ.

I want to say two things in concluding. According to this passage of Romans 3, we are:

1. under sin (verse 9), and
2. under law (verse 19).

When you put those two together, it is fatal, folks. There is nothing wrong with being under the law as long as you have a sinless nature. There was no problem with Adam being under the law. There is no problem with the unfallen angels being under the law because their nature, that is the nature of love, is in harmony with the law they are under. But to put sinful man under the law is fatal. I'll tell you why. I'll give you the text: I Corinthians 15:56:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

In other words, the law gives sin the authority to kill. So, if you are under the law and a sinner at the same time, then you are under the curse and the condemnation of the law and that is a problem.

I want to give you some good news. We won't cover it today, but, in chapter 6, Paul tells us how and why we were delivered from under sin. And, in chapter 7, he tells us how and why we are delivered from under law. We need deliverance from both. We are delivered from under sin, verse 22 of chapter 6, that we may live holy lives:

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Without that deliverance we cannot live holy lives. Romans chapter 7, verse 6:

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of

the written code.

Or to put it in simple English: that we may serve God out of love and not fear. Because anyone who is living under the law is living under fear and I will give you the best evidence.

I don't know about you, but every time I travel and I pass a police car, I put on the brakes automatically. I'll tell you why: because I live under fear of the law of America because I love those green papers that I get every month. How about you? When you see a policeman, do you automatically slow down? Why? Because we are living under fear. One day Steve Rote, my associate, introduced me to a policeman in Walla Walla [Washington, U.S.A.] who is a friend of his, and I said to him, "Are you going to be lenient with me?" and he said, "No, I'm going to get you."

I hope he was joking.

To live under the law means to live under fear. To live under grace means to live with joy and love

and appreciation.

But now I want to conclude.

1. Paul introduces his epistle to the Romans in chapter one, verse 16 and I want to remind you of that verse. He says:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

In other words, the gospel is all inclusive, it includes the whole human race.

2. Why? Because Paul says: “All are under sin and all are guilty under the law.” Every human being needs the gospel and the gospel is there, available for every human being. Jew and Gentile, there is no exception — All are under sin.

3. The law simply proves the point. The law

simply exposes us to the fact that we are sinners from head to foot. So, in other words, verses 19 and 20 are crucial, a prerequisite to our accepting the gospel.

4. Man is a slave to sin. Even though he knows the law, he cannot save himself.

The question I am going to ask you in concluding is: has the law done its job in your life? I know it gets done in mine. Because I'll tell you, folks, I am the chief of sinners. You may think I'm a saint, but you don't know me; ask my wife or my kids. I thank God for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is only when the law has silenced your mouth that I can turn to verse 21 and say, "But now I have good news for you."

But as long as you have some confidence in yourself, you can never rejoice in Jesus Christ and it is my prayer that the law will do its job in your life and in mine. Not only now, but all through

your life, the law is there to remind you that you and I, in and of ourselves, are 100 percent sinners, saved by grace; and I thank God for the law. The moment you do away with the law, you don't need a gospel. Am I correct? We need the law. Every city needs the law, not as a means of salvation but to show them that inside there is nothing good in them and that they need a saviour.

So, let us preach the law in its right setting. Let us preach the law as a prerequisite to lead us to Christ, because that is what Paul spoke about in Galatians 3. The law is our schoolmaster; it puts us in prison with no escape until it brings us to Christ and then it releases us. That was the message that God brought to the church 100 years ago, and we are still groping in the darkness.

It is my prayer that every mouth in this church will be stopped and every member will be guilty before God and will say, "What shall I do now?" And in the next study, I will tell you that the righteousness of God is available to you now.

May God bless you, that you shall know the truth and the truth will make you free.

Chapter 5

Righteousness by Faith

(Romans 3:21-23)

I want to begin this very important study by asking you a question, and that is, “Has the law silenced your mouth? Has it made you speechless? Or are you still talking?”

Now for those of you who haven't studied the last lesson, you may be wondering what I'm asking. Let me quickly review what we've covered.

In the last three studies, we have been studying Paul's explanation of the sinful problem of mankind. He begins in Romans 1:18 where he says:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

In other words, he says, and then he goes on to explain in verse 19 right to the end of chapter 1, that the problem of the Gentile world, is that they are ungodly. Man does not like to retain God in his mind. He wants to live without God. Last Sabbath, I read a statement from a company that did a survey in Seattle [Washington, U.S.A.] regarding religious attitudes. The majority of people living in Seattle feel that they can live good, moral, upright lives without God. Man thinks he can live without God, but when man turns his back to God, says Paul, the result is unrighteousness. And the reason why crime is increasing in this country is for that very reason. The more we turn our backs to God, the more sin will increase.

In chapter 2 up to 3:8, Paul turns his attention to the Jews. He says, “You Jews are no better!” The reason he makes this distinction between Gentiles and Jews is because, while the Gentiles had the knowledge of God through nature and they had the knowledge of His law in their conscience, this was only an implicit knowledge of God and

His law. But over and above this, God had given a very clear, explicit revelation of Himself and His law to the Jews. Says Paul in Romans 3:2:

...First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.

But ultimately it makes no difference, because a knowledge of the law doesn't make you righteous. In the Jews there is precisely the same tendency of turning their backs to God, to Jehovah, and trying to worship their own gods and worship idols. Paul concludes in chapter 3:9:

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge the Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.

He has proved and he has worked it from every conceivable angle, that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. This means that we are by nature sold to sin. Even of ourselves, no person has, nor can produce a righteousness that will qualify him

for heaven. There are none that are just. There is no one that does good. Paul concludes this dark, dismal picture of the human race in verses 19 and 20:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

The purpose of the law is to silence us. Both the Gentiles and the Jews are under the law. The Gentiles have the law in their conscience. The Jews have the law in this written form. But ultimately, there are none righteous. Both are guilty under the law. Both deserve punishment. “Therefore,” says Paul, “the whole world becomes guilty before God.” And the question I asked at the beginning is: “Has the law done that to you?”

It is no use preaching the gospel to people who

think that they can make themselves Christians by their good works. I'm wasting my time. The first work of the Bible — the first work of the gospel — is to shut our mouths up. Has it done that to you? I know it has done it to me! I can say with Paul, "In me, that is, in my human nature, there is nothing good." And "Therefore," verse 20 says, "by the deeds of the law" how many will be justified in His sight? The answer is: no one, Jew or Gentile. All that the law can do is to give us a knowledge of sin.

The law has a very glorious part in the gospel! The law has to first show us that we are totally bankrupt when it comes to righteousness. And Paul has been doing exactly that in chapter 1:18 right up to chapter 3:20. After he had laid this foundation, after he had silenced his readers, both Jews and Gentiles, after he had painted this dark, dismal, hopeless picture of the human race, he says in Romans 3:21:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

In other words, the only way you and I can attain to righteousness, the only way you and I can be qualified for heaven, is through the righteousness of God that comes to us by faith alone, and it is only after you have understood what the law was given for. God never gave the law to save us. It was never given as a means of salvation. And number two, it was never given as an added requirement for salvation.

In the last study, we read Galatians 3:17 onward. Why did God give the law 430 years after He promised salvation to Abraham and his seed? It was not because He was adding another requirement. It was that the law might be a schoolmaster that will lead us to Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

I hope the law has done that. I believe that God has restored the law in Adventism for that very reason. You cannot preach the gospel without the law first doing its job. And I pray that it has done the job in your life and in mine, that you can say

with Paul, 'I have no more confidence in this flesh.'

Now that Paul has done that, he introduces his gospel, and he defines his gospel in verse 21 of chapter 3 right up to verse 31. And I would like to say without any question, that these eleven verses, verses 21-31 of Romans, are very crucial, because they sum up together, in a nutshell, what the plan of salvation is all about, how mankind is saved, and how that salvation becomes effective.

Therefore, it would be unfair for me to tackle these eleven verses in one study. You would, number one, have spiritual indigestion, and number two, I would never be able to do justice to it in a single study. So I'm going to deal only with three verses today. And then, next study, I'll deal with verses 24-26, and then, in the following study, with verses 27-31. In other words, we're going to spend three studies on this passage because every word, every statement in this passage is loaded, and we need to dig and find out what Paul is saying.

With this in mind, let's begin our study of verses 21-23. I want you to notice first of all, that Paul introduces the gospel by two very important words. We tend to gloss over those words and we dare not. He introduces the gospel by two words:

But now....

These two words are tremendous. They are important and we need to come to grips with what Paul means by them. And I would like to show you at least three reasons why these two words are important.

1. First of all, these two words "But now" are used by Paul as an introduction to the gospel, in contrast to the dark, hopeless, dismal picture that he has painted about the human race, about you and me, in the previous passage, and especially the last two verses, 19 and 20. He has painted a dark, dismal picture, but he says, "But now the righteousness of God" has come. In other words, he doesn't leave us lying down in that dismal position. He says, "I have good news for you."

“But now.” So number one, those two words are important as an introduction to the gospel. And after the law has done its job, after the law has shut you into death row, so that there is no escape, you can tell such people, “But now the righteousness of God” is available to you.

2. These two words come to us as a time factor. You see, Paul wrote Romans a few years after the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. What do I mean by time factor? Please keep your hand here in Romans chapter 3 and turn to chapter 1. I want you to notice what he says in his introduction to this epistle. In chapter 1:1-2, he says:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God — the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures....

You see, salvation was not an afterthought. God promised salvation from the moment Adam sinned. But salvation was only a promise to Adam.

It was a promise to Noah. It was a promise to Abraham. Paul makes it clear that Abraham was saved by a promise. “But now,” it is no longer a promise. “But now,” it is manifested. Please look at the word. It is in the past tense. “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is manifested....” In other words, it is now an historical reality.

The Germans have an excellent word for this, “Heilgeschichte” — salvation history. It is no longer a promise, it is an historical reality. Therefore, we are not living in the period of B.C., we are living in the period of A.D. And this time factor must be applied not only in terms of the historical Christ, but also in terms of each believer, because every believer can divide his life into two periods, B.C. and A.D. Before Christ, you were under condemnation. There was no hope. There was no peace. There was no assurance. But now that you have accepted Christ, you are no longer living in that time period. You’re living now in the A.D. period. Christ has now become your righteousness. And this brings me to point number

three.

3. Those two words are extremely important to us as a tool that we must use as Christians, in terms of our assurance of salvation. Let me ask you a question. Supposing the devil comes to you and, after he has knocked you down with a temptation, he says, “Now, you do not deserve salvation! You are not good enough!” What do you do when he knocks you down? What do you do when you read the Bible, especially the book of the law and you feel all undone? What do you do when you young people read Messages to Young People [by Ellen G. White] and say, “Boy, I can never make it!”? Do you lie down and let the devil keep you down there, defeated? Or do you say, “Yes, I am a sinner. I’m not good enough to be saved. I don’t feel righteous. Yes, you’re right, Satan. ‘But now the righteousness of God.’” That is what a Christian can do, because our salvation is based on the righteousness of God.

I want to give you a beautiful promise. I want to do it for one reason. There are many Adventists

who unfortunately have turned Ellen G. White into a legalist, when she is not. So I'm going to read you this beautiful statement from Gospel Workers, page 161. Please take note of it.

“The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed...”

Have you got it? Not imparted! Which I believe in. The Bible teaches it and Ellen G. White teaches it, but she talking now of imputed righteousness.

“The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed...”

That is, put to your account. God reckons you like that. Not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God.

“...is a precious thought....”

Is the righteousness of Christ to you a precious thought?

“The enemy of God and man is not willing that the truth should be clearly presented....”

I believe that statement! The churches are dying for a clear understanding of this truth. Our people are dying!

“The enemy of God and man is not willing that the truth should be clearly presented for he knows that if the people receive it fully...”

Not only taught it, but receive it. And that I can't do for you. I can't receive it for you. That's your part. But he knows, the devil knows that if you could...

“...receive it fully, his power will be broken.”

Why? Because you have a tool now in your hands. You can say to him, “But now the righteousness of God.”

“If he can control minds so that doubt and

unbelief and darkness shall compose the experience of those who claim to be the children of God, he can overcome them with temptation.”

In other words, the secret for victorious living is to be grounded in the righteousness of Christ. It is no use trying to produce apples from an orange tree. Am I correct? The ground, the fruit which is sanctification, is justification by faith. And if our people have not understood justification by faith, you can spend years, you can shout at them, you can promote them, you can push them, you can give them incentives, you can give them a trip to Hawaii (you know, if they sell so many books), but we will never produce the fruits as long as we are insecure about our salvation! And the first thing that God gives us is “But now the righteousness of God.”

But now, let us go back. We can't spend all our time on those two words. Says Paul, in chapter 3 of Romans, verse 21:

But now a righteousness from God....

What does he mean by that, “...the righteousness of God”?

1. Well, number one, he means it is a righteousness planned by God. Do you know when He planned it? Before you and I were born. Before even Adam was created. Because Ephesians 1:4 says that:

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight....

And in Revelation, Jesus is called the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. You see, God knew that we would come into this terrible plight of sin. And before sin came in He had already planned our salvation in Jesus Christ. So number one, “the righteousness of God” means it’s a righteousness planned by God.

2. After He planned it, He promised it to the human race immediately after Adam fell. Do you remember what happened after Adam fell? God

came to visit him. Now why did God come to visit him? Well, Adam and Eve thought that He was coming to punish them, to execute judgment upon them, or to use a good American expression, they thought He was coming to zap them. Was He? No! Why did He come? He came to give them the promise of salvation. He promised this to Adam and Eve. He promised this to Noah. He promised this to Abraham and through the prophets. And that's what Paul means in Romans 3:21:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

He is saying, "This promise was witnessed by the law and the prophets."

The law means the Torah, the books of Moses, and the prophets are the rest. But God did not simply promise. He fulfilled that promise in Jesus Christ. So it is a righteousness planned by God, it is a righteousness promised by God, it is a righteousness that is provided by God. And you

know, you and I did not make one ounce of contribution towards that righteousness. It is all of God! How do I know? Because after saying “But now the righteousness of God,” he adds the phrase, “apart from the law....” And that phrase has caused much confusion in the Christian church. What did Paul mean, that now we have the righteousness of God apart from the law? Or, as your King James says, “without the law”? What does he mean?

Well, I’ll tell you what it does not mean, but many Christians teach this. They teach that Jesus or God tried to save man through His law when He gave it to Moses. But because it failed, He did away with the law and He introduced grace. And therefore, they say, “without the law” means that from Christ onward the law has been done away with and we are saved only by grace.

This is the theology of those who divide the Bible into sections, into dispensations, and teach that God has, in different dispensations, dealt with mankind in different ways. They deny a fundamental truth of scripture and that is the unity

of the Bible. The Bible doesn't teach that God has different ways of salvation. There's only one way that God saves mankind, from Adam to the last man, and that is through His righteousness as a gift to us through Jesus Christ. God doesn't have two or three methods. Salvation by grace is not an afterthought because the law failed.

Then what does Paul mean by the phrase "apart from the law"? Well, whatever it means, it must never contradict Romans 3, verse 31. Because there in verse 31, I read:

Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Do we do away with the law through faith or through this doctrine of righteousness by faith? And the answer is not just no. It's a very strong NO! "Certainly not" in the New King James version. The King James says, "God forbid!" It's unthinkable! On the contrary! "We who preach righteousness by faith establish the law." So, Paul does not mean that apart from the law means that

God did away with the law to introduce grace. But I have still not answered the question. What does he mean then by “apart from the law”? Well, there are two statements that will help us.

First of all, you need to realize that phrase “apart from the law” is written in the context of Romans 3, verse 20. What does it say in verse 20?

Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

“Therefore, by observing the law,” how many will be justified? “No one.” What he means is that the righteousness of God is entirely from Him and we have not contributed one iota in terms of our law keeping. The conclusion proves this. Look at Romans 3, verse 28, which is the conclusion of his argument:

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

In other words, the righteousness that God offers mankind is planned, promised, provided, fulfilled from heaven, in Christ. It's a heavenly robe (often known as the righteousness of Christ); it's a heavenly garment, without a single thread of human devising. It is entirely from God. You and I have not contributed towards that righteousness, one iota. In other words, it is entirely a GIFT! It's FREE! And that's what Romans 3, verse 24 comes out with:

...And [all] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

You and I cannot contribute one iota towards it. That's why in Romans 3, verse 27, he says:

Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.

There is no boasting in righteousness by faith. Why? Because it is all of God and a gift to us. This is why we can use those two words, "But now

the righteousness of God.” You see, you can’t use these two words as long as you are looking at yourself and your performance, trying to make yourself a better Christian or improving your standing before God. The moment you do that, you cannot use this phrase, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law...” because there is no boasting in righteousness by faith. It is all of God. So, what is Paul saying here? He is saying: “But now God has obtained for us a righteousness which He planned and provided in Christ without any contribution from you or from me. It is entirely His work. It was promised before, but now it is an historical reality.”

That is what verse 21 is saying.

Now comes the question. How can I have this righteousness? What must I do for this righteousness to become mine? Well, do I have to pay some money? Well, I’ll tell you, if you pay me some money I’ll offer it to you. I wish I could say that. But I can’t. Does it mean going on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, like the Muslims go

to Mecca? The other day I received a letter from a company, and it said, “If you can get 30 of your members to take a trip to the Holy Land, we will give you a free ticket!”

I call that bribery and corruption. I had to write them and say, “Sorry, I have already been there. I worked there. And all I saw was corruption.” There’s nothing holy about the Holy Land. Believe it or not. They’ll rob you left, right, and center, if you don’t know the truth.

I don’t get righteousness by faith through going to the Holy Land. I do not get it by paying money. I do not get it by doing something. How then does this righteousness become mine? Paul’s answer in Romans 3, verse 22 is:

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference....

What Paul is saying here is that the righteousness of God is ours through faith in Jesus

Christ, and this applies to all. Whether you are a Jew, or whether you are a Gentile, or whether you lived in Old Testament times, or whether you lived in New Testament times, there is only one way that God can save you, and that is through the righteousness of God which is made effective through faith alone, and nothing else.

Now, of course, this word faith is sometimes misused and misunderstood. So, I would like briefly to explain what it means. I'm going to use only the book of Romans. I'll give you some other texts to look up if you want to.

1. Number one, the prerequisite for faith is a knowledge of the gospel. In Romans 10:17, I read that:

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

In other words, we cannot come to the knowledge of the gospel through rationale, or

through investigation through the scientific method. It comes to us by the preaching of the word, and that is why Romans 10, verse 15 says:

And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

That is the secret of beautiful feet in God’s eyes! “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel.” So number one, there has to be a knowledge of the gospel. That is why we have to witness! God’s righteousness is available to all mankind, but unfortunately, all people do not know it. And the first requirement to have faith is to know the truth. I believe that God has raised the Advent movement to finish this mission. For Jesus said in Matthew 24:14:

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

God will not send His Son the second time,

until the world has had a chance to say, “God, thank you for Your unspeakable gift!” Or reject Him.

2. Number two, and it is found in verse 22 of chapter 3, faith means believing in the truth. You must know the truth, and number two, you must believe the truth. The word “believe” simply means a mental assent to what is true. This is not as easy as it is said. I’ll tell you why. It is because the gospel is a contradiction of human nature, it is a contradiction of human reason, it is a contradiction of human righteousness. God offers you something in the gospel that it is impossible for you to attain. Let me give you an example.

If God comes to you married women who have passed the age of child bearing and tells you, “By the way, next year you’re going to have a son,” what will you say? You’ll have two options. After you have visited the general hospital, they will say, “Who told you this nonsense?” I hope they won’t, but they will say, “Well, I’m afraid I have bad news. It’s impossible for you to have children.

You've passed that age." But God says YOU WILL! Do you believe that? Did Abraham believe that Sarah would have a child after she had passed the age of child bearing? Faith is believing the impossible!

In 1961, I was selling books for my school fees to Newbold [College], in a town called Kiruna, 150 miles north of the Arctic Circle in Sweden. It's the only place where I found more mosquitos than in Africa. They had mosquitos everywhere. And big ones, too! Bigger than the African ones. They must have imported them from Texas. They were huge and they liked to suck your blood. Anyway, for six weeks the sun never went down below the horizon. They call it "The Land of the Midnight Sun." The first weekend, the first Friday night, my friend John, who was a dean, and I, waited to see how low the sun would go. We knew from the calendar that it would be at the lowest point at quarter past midnight. So we waited and it went down to an angle [above the horizon]. I took my watch and photographed the sun with it at midnight.

Later I showed this slide to my African brethren on the equator, where the sun sets, all year round, at 6:15 p.m. One old man who had never been to school, he could not read or write, came up to me and said, “Who are you trying to deceive? We know what you did! You changed your watch to 12 o’clock and then you photographed the sun! Don’t give me that nonsense!” he said. Now, if I had money, I would have bought him a ticket and took him to Kiruna and let him see it with his own eyes. And I would say, “Now, what do you think?” And he would say, “You’re correct!”

God tells you that, in Christ, you have never sinned. Or if I may use the words of Steps to Christ [by Ellen G. White]:

“When you accept Christ, God looks at you as if you have never sinned.”

Do you believe that? Or do you say, “Well, I’m not good enough! I don’t feel righteous!”

God says, “I don’t care what you feel. I’m telling you that you are righteous in My Son!”

And you say, “Well...,” like Sarah laughed when the angel said, “Next year your wife will have a son.” What if you do? You could say, “Where did these fellows go to school? They need to go to Loma Linda [University in California, U.S.A.] and discover that you can’t have children after you pass the age of child bearing.” God is able to do the impossible and He has done the impossible in Jesus Christ. Do you believe it? But there is a third requirement.

3. It is not enough simply to have a mental assent to the truth. There is a heart obedience required. Let me give you several texts. You won’t be able to read all of them. In the very introduction to Romans, Romans 1:5, Paul brings it out. After explaining Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, he says:

Through him and for his name’s sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from

among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.

This message has to be obeyed, the obedience of faith.

Then, in chapter 6 of Romans, speaking about the Roman Christian, in verse 17 he says:

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

The Roman Christians believed, obeyed the gospel. And then in chapter 10:16, turning to the Jews, the Jewish nation whom he loved, but who had turned their backs to Jesus Christ, he says:

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?”

They have not all obeyed the gospel.

So you Romans, salvation is yours. You have obeyed the gospel. You Jews, don't blame God. In Christ, you have righteousness, but you have not obeyed the gospel. And it is not because you did not hear the gospel! You heard it, but, as Isaiah said [Isaiah 53:1]:

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

What does it mean to obey the gospel? Does it mean doing something?

The answer is no! It means surrendering your will to the truth as it is in Christ. You see, God has rewritten your history in Christ. He put you in Christ and He rewrote your history.

And because we are sinners, there was something essential that had to take place,(and we'll cover this when we do verse 31), and that is that you and I had to die! "The wages of sin is death" [Romans 6:23]. Jesus did not come to change the death sentence. He did not come to

substitute the death sentence. He came to fulfill it. And, in Christ, it was fulfilled! For, in Christ's death, it wasn't just one man dying instead of all men, or in place of all men. In Christ, all men died in one Man! That is the true doctrine of substitution. II Corinthians 5:14:

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

When One died, all died. Obeying the gospel is to say with Paul [Galations 2:20]:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lived in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

When we have understood the true meaning of faith, the fruit [or result] is always holiness of living, because Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The life He lived 2,000 years ago He can live in you. But He doesn't do that to give you

assurance or to save you, but as evidence of righteousness or justification by faith. Obedience to the gospel is saying, “Not I, but Christ.”

How is this righteousness effective? Through faith alone! Not through faith plus works. Through faith that works! But never plus works. Paul continues [Romans 3:22-23]:

...There is no difference [between Jew and Gentile], for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....

What does he mean here? The word “sin” means missing the mark. In other words, the word “sin” means coming short of the glory of God. Now, is Paul repeating himself twice? Is he saying that all are coming short of the glory of God and all are coming short of the glory of God? The answer is no.

I want you to look at those two statements. Paul makes two statements in verse 23. The first one, “all have sinned,” is in the past historic tense.

He uses what we call in Greek the aorist tense, meaning something that has happened once and for all in the past: “All have sinned.” And the question we must ask is: “When did all sin in the past?”

He doesn't answer the question here, but he will answer the question in Romans 5. The answer is (and we will cover that in detail) that all have sinned in Adam. We can't deal with this right now. I know this is a big problem, but you have to wait until we come to Romans 5:12. He uses the same phrase in the same aorist tense in Romans 5:12:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned....

Death comes upon all, because all have sinned. However, Paul is saying in verse 23 of chapter 3: “Besides that, we are presently, continuously coming short of the glory of God.”

The second statement, “[all] fall short of the

glory of God,” is in the present tense. So not only have we sinned in Adam, but, apart from that, we also are sinning. Therefore, whether you look at our heritage, or whether you look at our performance, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, none of us are qualified for heaven. The only way that you and I can make it to the kingdom of God is through righteousness by faith, the righteousness of God that comes to us by faith. That’s why at the beginning of this study, I asked the question, “Have you been silenced by the law?” If you haven’t, then you can never say, “But now a righteousness from God, apart from [my deeds of the] law, has been made known....”

It’s no longer promised; it’s a reality! It has become mine through faith alone. “My hope is built on nothing else, but Jesus Christ and His righteousness.” That is why you and I can have hope! That is why I don’t have to lie on the ground every time Satan knocks me down. In Christ, God looks at me perfectly and fully justified. It is from that position that I walk the Christian life with hope and assurance. If I don’t have that assurance, I am

always concerned about my security and, as long as I am concerned about my security — my eternal security — I can never serve Christ with a clear, free of self, motive. God wants us to serve Him without a selfish motive. We cannot do that unless He has first liberated us from the fear of eternal death.

And He has done that in justification by faith. That is why it is extremely important that we understand what Paul is trying to say to us.

May God bless us, so that you and I, having been silenced by the law, can say, “But now the righteousness of God....”

That is my prayer for each one of you in Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Chapter 6

Legal Justification

(Romans 3:24-26)

24 ...And [all] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. **25** God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished — **26** he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

As we turn to verses 24, 25, and 26 of Romans 3, we will discover that Paul is dealing with an extremely important truth here. First of all, I want you to look at verse 24 because here in verse 24 Paul is pointing us to three facts concerning the righteousness of God which He has now made available to us through his son Jesus Christ.

1. The righteousness of God justifies us.

That is the first truth verse 24 brings out, that the righteousness of God justifies us. What does Paul mean by that word “justifies” because it is one of those key words, it’s a crucial word in the New Testament. Well, this word, “justifies,” primarily had a legal connotation. It’s a term that is used in the court, it is used by judges, and it has a legal connotation. We need to be clear on this.

I’ll tell you why: because there are some now in our own church, some of our scholars, who want to do away with this legal meaning. Like one scholar says, the word only means “set right.” Well, I’ll tell you folks, if you take the word “justified” in the New Testament and translate it or exchange it for the words “set right” and you will discover in some places it makes good sense, but in some places it does not because you cannot limit the word “justified” to simply “set right.”

The reason for this is because, as we shall see in verses 25 and 26, that there are some (it began

among the liberal theologians and it is now creeping into our church) who do not want to accept the legal framework of the atonement and I will say a few more things about it in a moment. But the word “justified” primarily had a legal definition.

Let me give you two examples how this word is used in scripture. Keep your finger here at Romans 3 and turn your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 25. This is counsel given by God through Moses to Israel as God prepares her to be a theocracy in the country of Canaan and this is the instruction that God gives because in a theocracy God is not only their spiritual leader but He is also their political leader. In verse 1 of chapter 25 of Deuteronomy I read these words:

When men have a dispute, they are to take it to court [please notice they come to court, it’s a legal matter] and the judges will decide the case, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty.

Please notice that you justify, or acquit, the

righteous and you condemn the wicked. These two words “justify” and “condemn” are legal terms; they are terms that are used in connection with the law. When you obey the law, the law justifies you, and when you disobey, it condemns you.

Let me give you one more example; turn to the I Kings 8. I want to give you a couple of examples of how this word is used in a legal framework in the Bible. Let’s look at verse 32; this is a plea for God to hear and to judge:

...Then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty and bringing down on his own head what he has done. Declare the innocent not guilty, and so establish his innocence.

Please notice the legal framework of the words. So, going back to Romans 3:24, the righteousness justifies us. What does that mean? That means that those who believe in Christ (because verse 22 talks about righteousness by faith, those who accept the righteousness of Christ through faith),

God declares you or looks upon you as if you are righteous. I know some of you will say, “I don’t feel righteous. I am not righteous.” And you are right in both areas. God doesn’t declare us righteous because we are righteous; God declares us righteous because of His righteousness. It’s the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ that is the issue here. The righteousness of God justifies us.

Now this is something tremendous because you see, in verse 19, Paul has just told us that according to the law, the whole world is guilty before God, which means that the law of God condemns us. But now comes the righteousness of God and it justifies us.

I want you to notice that is that the word “justified” in Romans 3:24 is in the present tense: “being justified.” Paul is not saying that one day in the future God will justify you; he says no, right now, in the present tense, you are justified (as he will go on) through the redemption that is in Christ.

What does it mean for a person to stand

justified before God? The answer is found in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in John 5. You see, in Chapter 3 of John, verse 17, Jesus tells Nicodemus that:

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Now in chapter 5, verse 24, I want you to notice how different translations begin. The New King James Bible puts it “most assuredly”; others read “verily, verily.” They all mean, “this is guaranteed” (and this is Christ speaking):

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has [not will have, but already has] eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

Yes, in ourselves we stand condemned to death, but in Christ we have passed from condemnation of death to justification of life. That is the first thing that verse 24 says, that in the present situation, the

moment you believe, the righteousness of God in Christ becomes effective to you and you have passed from death to life, you are now being justified. That's number one.

2. Going back to Romans 3:24, you will notice that this justification comes to us not because we have paid some money or because we have made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, it comes to us freely.

...And [all] are justified freely....

What does that word “freely” mean? It means “without cost.” As Isaiah 55 puts it, “it is without money and without price.” It's free, but it is more than a gift. It is more than that because I read on:

...And [all] are justified freely by his grace....

Now “by his grace” gives a very definite meaning to the word “freely.” What kind of meaning does it give? That word “grace,” like the word “justified,” is also a crucial word in the New Testament. What does it mean? Normally, it is

explained as “unmerited favor” or “undeserved favor.” But let me explain it in a little more in detail by giving you an example.

Let us say that Steve, my friend, has an appointment and I know about it, so, while he’s gone, I come to his house and I beat up his wife, Kathy, giving her a real black eye. Of course, the kids are at school and the baby is crying and while they are all doing that, I take his furniture and I wreck it, taking his axe and smashing his furniture and I burn up his T.V. set and I do everything terrible and then I take off. Steve then comes home from his appointment and sees Kathy on the floor all bruised and beaten up and bleeding and he says, “What happened? Did an earthquake strike?”

Kathy says, “No, it was that fellow Jack who did it.”

And Steve gets into his car and he flies, breaking the speed limit, and comes to the house and I see him from the window and his hands are behind his back and I say to myself, “I bet he has a

revolver and he is coming to shoot me for what I've done." And I say to myself, "Shall I run or shall I stand up?" And I say, "No, I'll be a coward if I run. I'll try and disarm him before he shoots me."

And so I go and open the door and I look at him and he says, "Jack, why did you do this? I am your friend." I have no answer. He pulls his hands from his back and I am expecting a revolver and guess what it is? It's a check for \$1,000.00. Now that is grace, folks. That's grace.

Here we are folks, we crucified the Son of God and what does God do? He forgives us. What did Christ do on the cross? He said, "Father, forgive them."

Now that, folks, is grace. Grace is not only doing you a good favor, it is doing a good favor to somebody who hates you, to somebody who is your enemy, as we shall see in Romans 5:10:

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were

reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. That is grace, folks. That is why the gospel is unconditional good news. God doesn't say, "First you shape up and change your ways then I will justify you"; He justifies us not only freely but by his grace. That's number two, folks, we need to keep this in mind.

3. I want to go to number 3, because number 3 is extremely important. For there I read in verse 24 that I am not only justified freely and graciously, but that this justification is:

...through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

And it is here, folks, where creation and redemption part company because, you see, the same Jesus who created us is also the same Jesus who redeemed us, but there is a difference. All

that God had to do to create this world was to simply speak, to make a statement. All that God had to do was to say, “Let there be light,” and there was light, because the breath of God — the words of God — are power, energy. He can create something out of nothing and all God had to do was to speak the word and it happened.

Now, of course, He could have done that also for us. God did not have to make us out of dust and breathe into us the breath of life, He could have created us by simply making a statement. The only reason why He made us of the dust of the earth is because He knew, through His foreknowledge, that we would sin and He knew that sin would make us a proud people. So He deliberately made us out of mud so that, after we fell, we would be reminded when we got too proud of who we are.

You know, when we were in Africa, we discovered that the word for mud, the word for dust had some beautiful expressions. For example, in Uganda the word for dust or mud is “fufu.” Sounds

wonderful! That's what you and I are made of. In Ethiopia, the word for mud is "cushasha." It sounds terrible, those words, but that's what we are and God knew that we needed a reminder that our glory is as beautiful as the dust of the earth.

But when it comes to redemption, God could not save us simply by making a statement. God could not say, "Well, I love these dear people. I know they have gone wrong, they have broken my law, but I am God and no one is above me. I can do what I like and I love them and so I declare you forgiven. I declare you justified simply because I love you."

God could not do that because God is not only love, He is a just God. He could not redeem us, He could not justify us, by bypassing his law because his law says the soul that sins must die. God has to be true to his own word, otherwise He becomes an unjust God Himself.

When the policeman forgives me for speeding, he is doing an unjust thing because he never

volunteers to pay the ticket. How many policemen that have forgiven you have paid the ticket for you? They can forgive you by excusing you because they are sinful men but God can't do that. He is a holy God, He is a righteous God. He can't simply make a statement and say, "I love you so I forgive you."

Justification by faith is free to you and me but it is extremely costly to God. Let me put it this way: if God gave me a million dollars today, it would cost Him nothing because He can create gold out of stones, He can simply speak the word and the stones can turn into gold. That's no problem for God. But, when He gave me His only begotten Son, do you realize that He gave me something that He could not replace? He gave me His only begotten Son and, in giving me His Son, He was giving me Himself. We shall see in a minute what that involved.

The reason I'm stressing this is because, as I said already, there are many people today who think and teach that God did not have to send his

Son, and Christ did not have to die on the cross to justify us. He did it because He wanted to influence us. This is called the “Moral Influence Theory.”

Through the years there have been many theories in the Christian church concerning the atonement. There is the Satisfaction Theory, there is the Ransom Theory, the Governmental Theory, and there is the Moral Influence Theory. The 14th, 15th Century came up with this theory.

Each theory says this is the correct meaning of the atonement. I’ll tell you, folks, the atonement is too big an event to be locked up in only one theory; it is too big. In fact, we will never be able to comprehend all of the mysteries of the atonement until we go to heaven. We will spend eternity wrestling with the atonement. Each of these theories have an aspect of truth but they become wrong when they deny the other. In other words, there is nothing wrong in the Moral Influence Theory in its teaching, it is correct that the death of Christ on the cross demonstrated the love of God,

which should change my attitude towards God. There is nothing wrong with that; that's correct.

It's wrong because of what it denies. A lot of heresy in this Christian church is not wrong in what they teach; they are wrong in what they deny. Anyone who denies the legal framework of the atonement is doing God an injustice. Do you know that? God could not simply save us because He loved us; God's love and justice had to meet together and they met at the cross. It was only at the cross that God became legally just in justifying us and that is what verse 25 and 26 are talking about. Let us read it first:

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

In Chapter 3, verse 24, we are told that we are

justified freely, but it is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. What does the word “redemption” mean?

It means to be ransomed from something that you are under. For example, if you read the New Testament, you will discover that we are redeemed from the Devil [Hebrews 2:14,15], or we are redeemed from death [I Cor. 15: 56, 57], or we are redeemed from sin [Roman 6:22], but here in this context Paul is saying that we are redeemed from the curse of the law.

He says the same things in Galatians, so let me give you a similar argument found in Galatians chapter 3. I want you to notice what the law says in verse 10. Please notice the clear statement of Scripture:

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse...

For those who try to go to heaven by their own righteousness, the law will curse them, not because

they haven't tried. But, why does the law curse you if you are trying to go to heaven by your works?

...For it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

Now the question is: "Have you kept the law in detail, continuously, from the time you were born?" Have you? If you have not, then you are under the curse. The law says so. God could not bypass this curse, he could not do it because He is a just God, He is a holy God. So I read in Galatians 3, verse 13 the good news of salvation:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

Notice the past tense. There are three main truths that the cross reveals (which I will be covering in detail at another time):

1. The cross demonstrates that Satan is a liar and a murderer and that the human heart is desperately wicked. We need to know that. John 8:44 says that:

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

2. Then I want to show you how the cross demonstrates the love of God. Romans 5:8 will touch that, too:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

3. But here, the cross demonstrates the justice of God. In other words, through the cross of Christ, God is just in justifying the sinner.

He has redeemed us, He has ransomed us,
He has set us free by the cross.

When I was in Africa, I had a coworker with me. He was a black American and we worked together in the Ministerial Department. He was from Seattle [Washington, U.S.A.] and, at that time, I had only heard of Seattle and didn't know what it looked like. He was a good man and we worked together and he often would tell a story. It would be a story that had some meaning to him because it had to do with slavery.

The story was about a man — a strapping, strong slave. He was sold in this country many years ago on an auction block and the auctioneer introduced him as a “strong, capable young man and you would be able to get a lot of work out of him.” Before anyone could bid, the slave opened his mouth and said, “I am not going to work for anybody.”

The auctioneer told him to keep quiet. The bid went on and on and a man at the back kept bidding,

refusing to back down and he went up and up and finally nobody could compete with him and he got the bid and the auctioneer said, “He’s all yours!”

The man came forward with the money, gave the money to the auctioneer and the auctioneer gave him the keys of the shackles. As the new owner dragged this man away, the slave began muttering “I am not going to work for you.” The owner just kept quiet and took him away from the crowd, undid the key, took off the shackles off his hands and his feet and he said, “Now, you are no longer a slave. I didn’t buy you; I don’t know where you got the idea. But I didn’t buy you to use you to work for me; I bought you to free you. You are a free man, you can go where you like. The world is yours!”

This slave did not know how to react. He was so shocked by this that he fell down on his knees and he said to the slave owner who bought him, “I will work for you all the rest of my life!”

That is the attitude we must have towards

Christ. Christ did not buy us so that He may use us; He bought us that He may share with us His throne and His kingdom and all the joys of heaven. That's why He bought us, why He redeemed us. It was free to us, but it was very costly to God.

Now in verse 25 there are two words that I want to touch quickly. The first word [in some translations] is “propitiation.” It's a word that has caused endless problems in this controversy about the atonement. What does it mean to propitiate? Well, the word comes from a Greek word called “hillastraion” and a similar noun used in 1 John 2:2 and 1 John 4:10. “Hillasmos” and the equivalent verb “hilastos” are found in Hebrews 2:17. This word was used in the days of the New Testament, in Pagan customs and religion, and was used to refer to sacrifices that the Pagans would give to appease their angry god. That is what the word “propitiate” means: to appease somebody who is angry with you.

The word came about because of the idea that God up there is an angry judge ready to punish you

unless somebody appeases his anger. Jesus said, “Look God, please don’t get angry at these poor people; I will die in their place” and so God was satisfied. No, that is never the use of propitiation in the New Testament. You see, in the Pagan culture:

1. It was always the person, the human being, who offered the sacrifice to appease an angry god. In the gospel, it wasn’t man that offered the sacrifice; it was God Himself who offered Himself as a sacrifice. So there’s a world of difference between Pagan custom and Christianity.
2. The person never offered himself. He offered an animal or vegetable or mineral and sometimes he offered babies, but never himself. But, in the Gospel, God not only offers the sacrifice, but He offers Himself for our sins. So, please, we must not project the word “propitiation” from Pagan culture into Christianity. This is what has caused the problem.

So what does the word mean? Well, the word

was used in the Old Testament for the mercy seat that was over the Ark of the Covenant and if you look at Leviticus 16:15,16 or if you look at Hebrews 9:5 where these words are used, you will notice that the word “propitiation” simply means that, through the blood of Christ, our sins were expiated or cancelled or taken away. In other words, God took away our sins and our guilt and the punishment that comes with it through the blood of Christ and this brings us to the second word.

What does the New Testament mean by the word “blood”? It does not mean the blood of Christ in terms of the literal blood that went through his veins. The word “blood” is a symbol, it is used as a type pointing to a truth and, in the Old Testament, the blood symbolized life. Let me give you one text, Leviticus 17:11:

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar: it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.

So what does blood mean?

It means life. What does “shed blood” mean? It means life that is laid down in death. On the cross Jesus died, but He did not die the first death. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that:

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

It becomes obvious that he could not have tasted the first death for every person for the simple reason that believers who have accepted Christ and who stand justified must also still die the first death. But they will never die the second death [see Rev. 20:6]. Why? Because there is one who tasted the second death for you and me.

What does it all mean? What was the issue on the cross? It is this: that on the cross Jesus was willing to say “goodbye” to life, not for three days

(there would be no sacrifice in that), but that He was willing to say “goodbye” to life forever that we may live in his place. That is the love of God and that propitiation, that blood that was poured out for us, satisfied the law because the law says that the soul that sins must die. We will cover that in more detail, but I would like at this point to remind you that we dare not throw away the legal framework of the atonement. Jesus could not save us apart from the cross.

Let me give you a couple of statements before we go to verse 26. This is from the Spirit of Prophecy [by Ellen G. White]. This first one is 6BC, page 1,099:

“Justice demands that sin be not merely pardoned but the death penalty must be executed. God in the gift of His only begotten Son met both these requirements. By dying in men’s stead, Christ exhausted the penalty...”

Do you know what that means? [It means] that every sin that you have committed or that you will

commit to your dying day has already been exhausted on the cross, been paid for.

“...Christ exhausted the penalty and provided pardon. As Hebrews 9:22 says: ‘according to the law, there can be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood.’”

Let’s go on. Here is the second statement from 2 Testimonies, page 201:

“The death of Christ proclaims the justice of the Father’s law in punishing the transgressor in that He consented to suffer the penalty of the law Himself in order to save fallen men from its curse.”

This is the New Testament meaning of propitiation. Recently, one of our own scholars said to me that he did not believe in the legal framework of the atonement and I said, “What about Romans 3:25,26?” and he said, “Why don’t you read that text in the New English Bible?” Unfortunately I did not have the Bible with me so I came home and I read it and I didn’t know what he

meant because when I read the New English Bible it defends the legal framework more than the King James! It says that Christ's death demonstrated the justice of God. It uses the word "justice" there twice. Now let's look at verse 25, especially the second half:

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished....

What does it mean here? This last phrase has been misinterpreted by many. Paul is not saying here that when you accept Christ he forgives your past sins. The idea that justification is only the forgiveness of past sins is unbiblical. It is a heresy to me and I'll tell you why: because it leaves you in insecurity, because every time you make a mistake it means you become unjustified until you repent. So then you are a yoyo, in Christ and out of Christ. Such living is what produces poor Christianity in God's house!

We are living under the umbrella of the justification of Christ. This doesn't mean that we can condone sin, as we shall see when we come to Romans 6. You dare not condone sin under justification by faith. But what does Paul mean when he says that in the past God overlooked the sins that were previously committed? Here is what Paul is saying and the context supports this.

The word "beforehand" [or "past," in some translations] here refers to before Jesus shed his blood, before the cross event. Did God forgive sin? The answer is yes. Could He forgive sin in a just way? The answer is no, He forgave it out of His forbearance, out of His patience, out of kindness, but not out of justice, because His own law says there can be no forgiveness without the shedding of blood and the shedding of the blood of bulls and goats and lambs could not do that legally and that's what the book of Hebrews brings out, chapter 9 and 10 especially. But now verse 26 says:

...he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

That is legal justification, at least one meaning of legal justification. In other words, since the cross, God is absolutely just before his own law in forgiving us and this is what Paul means in verse 31, which we will cover in the next study. Do you make void the law through preaching justification by faith? Does this doctrine of justification by faith nullify the law? Paul says nothing doing. It upholds the law because in Christ — in his life and his death — God is legally just in justifying the believer.

In other words, before the law of God, you and I stand perfectly justified in Christ and God is upholding His law in doing that. God is not going against His law; in other words, the law and God are in harmony in justifying the believer and this is what Paul says:

...to demonstrate his justice at the present time,

so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

In other words, the Devil, before the cross, could point his finger at God and say, “You have no right to take these sinners to heaven. They are sinners!” But, since the cross, the Devil’s mouth has been shut up and God will say to the Devil, “I rebuke thee. Is not this a branch plucked out of the fire?”

Yes, by nature and performance we belong to the lake of fire, that’s where we belong by ourselves. But Jesus plucked us out of that fire and justified us and now He stands before the right hand of God, not to plead before the Father, but to defend that justification before the accusation of Satan and He is just in doing that.

In other words, why should we have the investigative judgment if I am already justified in Christ? The purpose of the investigative judgment is not to find out if you deserve heaven or not. None of us deserve heaven; we are saved by grace.

It is because our justification in Christ has to be vindicated before we go to heaven and, in the investigative judgment, Jesus will defend our justification and he will vindicate it and he will say to Satan, “You have no right to accuse them because they have accepted me and I am their propitiation. Therefore, I rebuke you.” And he will turn to us and say, “Come inherit the kingdom of my Father which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

My dear people, do you realize what the righteousness of God means to you?

1. It means that you are justified right now.
2. You are justified freely.
3. God is just in justifying you.

That is the message of the gospel and this is why we need to understand this. Because the world desperately needs to know that God is just in justifying the sinner and that, in Christ, we have salvation full and complete. This is a message that we need to preach to a perishing world. May God

help us to understand what this message is all about and then take it to the world and tell them this unconditional good news. May God bless us that you shall know the truth and the truth will set you free.

Chapter 7

The Law and the Gospel

(Romans 3:27-31)

We come now to our third and final study on this tremendous passage that we have been looking at for the last three studies, where Paul introduces us to and defines the unconditional good news of salvation in God's Son, Jesus Christ. As we conclude this passage, Romans 3:21-31, there are certain important facts that you need to keep constantly in your mind:

1. The Apostle Paul defines the Gospel as the righteousness of God. Never forget that. The gospel is the righteousness of God. By this Paul means that it is a righteousness that is all of God's doing. He planned it and He fulfilled it in His Son Jesus Christ. And that, of course, is in verse 21:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and

the Prophets testify.

2. This righteousness is made effective in your life, in my life, in the lives of every human being, through faith alone. We can't earn it by our good works and we can't buy it with money. It is ours only by faith, and that's why it is called Justification by Faith, the greatest discovery that [Martin] Luther made when he was delivered from his bondage to legalism. This is in verse 22:

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe....

3. This righteousness of God which justifies us qualifies us for heaven and for life now and in the judgment. In other words, legally we stand justified in Christ. That's in verse 24. Also in verse 24 Paul goes on to explain to us that this righteousness which justifies us is bestowed upon us freely and graciously. In other words, we do not deserve it. We cannot earn it. It's at no cost to us. It's given to us without us deserving it. It is freely and graciously bestowed upon us. Versus 24:

...And [all] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

4. Then, in verses 25 and 26, Paul goes on to show that God is just, He is right, He is legally just in justifying us sinners because of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In other words, because of the cross, God legally can qualify you and me for heaven. And that is something extremely important which he will bring up again in verse 31, which we will cover today. Verses 25-26:

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished — he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

But I would like to give you a text to remind you of what we covered in the last study; that is Hebrews 9:22. The Apostle Paul there, writing to

the Jewish Christians, makes it very clear.
Hebrews 9:22:

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

God can legally forgive you, He can forgive me, because of the redemption that is in Christ. Now, let's turn to verse 27. Paul begins verse 27 by asking a question:

Where, then, is boasting?

Does the gospel leave any room for boasting?
And his answer is:

It is excluded.

There is no room for boasting. Here is all of
verse 27:

Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No,

but on that of faith.

So the reason for this, he says, is: “Since our works do not contribute one iota towards the righteousness of God that justifies us, and since the righteousness of God comes to us through faith alone, there is no room for human boasting.”

Now there is room for boasting, but not for human boasting. If you turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, you will find that Paul makes a similar statement, but there he says, “There is need for boasting.” Except he puts it in a different way. So I want you to look at chapter 1 of 1 Corinthians, and look at the last two verses. In verse 30, Paul explains that our hope is in Christ, and that hope has come to us through God:

It is because of him [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption....

Then, quoting from the Old Testament [Jer.

9:24], he says:

Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

Yes, there is room for boasting, but our boasting must be in Jesus Christ. There is no boasting in ourselves. In other words, “There is no room for human pride, there is no room for human bragging,” says Paul, “in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, because it is all of God’s doing.”

In verse 29 and 30 of Romans 3, Paul goes on to say that this truth of Justification by Faith applies to the Jews and to the Gentiles alike. But before we touch that I want you to look at verse 28, because verse 28 is the bottom line, it is the conclusion of this whole passage. It is the key text of his argument which began in verse 21:

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

So a person is justified by faith — is declared

righteous by faith — without the deeds of the law. Our law-keeping does not contribute one iota towards the righteousness that justifies us. It is all of God.

And this truth, says Paul, applies to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles. Verses 29-30:

Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles, too? Yes, of Gentiles, too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

In other words, God does not have one way of saving the Jews, and another way of saving the Gentiles. All people, from Adam to the last person, have been saved through the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ, and this is made effective by faith alone.

This truth is something important for today, because there are many who would like to divide God's dealings with the human race into

dispensations: “God had one way of saving Abraham, He had another way of saving Moses, He had another way of saving the New Testament people.”

No, folks, from beginning to end we are saved by the righteousness of Christ which is through faith alone. God has only one way of saving Jews and Gentiles, and God has only one way of saving mankind in the Old Testament period and in the New Testament period. The only difference is that, in the Old Testament period, people were saved by faith in the promise. In the New Testament period, we are saved by the reality of the promise, which is Jesus Christ. But in both cases it is by faith, in what God has promised and in what God has fulfilled.

Now comes the problem. It is impossible, and Paul realizes this, it is impossible to preach and to teach that we are justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law without coming under fire. Paul knows that. Everywhere he travelled in his missionary journeys he was dogged by these

Judaizers who accused him of undermining the law. They accused him of being a false teacher. They accused him of being a self-made Apostle. All kinds of accusations were thrust onto Paul. You see, there are two problems with this teaching of Justification by Faith:

1. It affects our pride. You see, if I am justified by faith, if I am justified by the righteousness of God, without any contribution from me, it implies that, spiritually, I am bankrupt; I can make no contribution. That is very painful to our egos. Man doesn't like to think that he can do nothing good. He admits that he does bad things, but to admit that there is nothing good in him is very painful to his ego. If you don't believe me, next time you go to the supermarket for your shopping, I suggest you stop somebody in the shop. Make sure that he is smaller and weaker than you. This is very important. And tell him, "I have some news for you."

He will say, "What's the news?"

You respond, “From head to foot, there is nothing good in you.”

Now you will have been telling him, or her, the truth, but you have been insulting that person. Because that person is smaller and weaker than you, he won't box you. But he could take your name down, or your car number plate down and take you to court. You have insulted that person.

Man doesn't like to believe that there is nothing good in him. But the gospel of Jesus Christ, the doctrine of Justification by Faith, turns all our goodness into filthy rags. And that is very painful to the human ego.

2. There is a second problem when you preach Justification by Faith. It sounds like, when you read verse 28, that Paul is undermining the law, and that was one of the key accusations that Paul faced in his ministry. When he was taken captive by this Jewish mob in Jerusalem, one of the accusations — you'll find that in the book of Acts, I won't tell you the text, you need to do some

homework — but you'll find in the book of Acts that one of the accusations that was made against Paul was that he was against the law.

This is an accusation that comes to everybody who preaches Justification by Faith alone. You can't escape it. In fact, when I was training ministers in Africa, I told them that this is what it will cost you. I am still waiting to come under fire in this church. I haven't as of yet, and I'm wondering why it's taking so long. Maybe it has, behind my back, but I haven't faced it yet openly. If somebody does accuse me behind my back, please send them to me. I'll be happy to sit down with them and give them what I understand from Scripture and they need to defend their position from Scripture. But the Bible is clear: we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Does this mean that the gospel, that the doctrine of Justification by Faith, undermines the law? That's the question that Paul is asking in Romans 3, verse 31:

Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith?

“Is this what I am doing in my preaching of the doctrine of Justification by Faith? Do we make void the law through faith?” And what is his answer [in the same verse]?

Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Now I would like to confess that this is one of the most misunderstood verses in the Bible. I have heard lots of talks, I have read a lot of material on this verse, but I am afraid I have to disagree with all of them. Let me give you a typical interpretation of verse 31 that you often read and hear:

“Do we then make void the law through faith? No! By faith God gives us His Spirit. He gives us power. And we are able to keep the law by God’s power, and by keeping the law, we are establishing the law.”

That is a typical interpretation of verse 31. I

would like to suggest that this is far from what Paul is talking about. I'll give you three reasons:

1. It does not agree with the context.
2. It does not agree historically.
3. It does not agree with the grammar.

We need to be honest with every text that we read. Paul is not saying here that by faith we keep the law through the grace of God, through the power of God, and that way we establish the law. Let me explain each one of them.

First of all, contextually. Paul is not dealing in this passage which we have covered with the doctrine of Sanctification. He is dealing with the doctrine of Justification by Faith. Yes, Paul has much to say in Romans on this doctrine of Sanctification, in chapters 6, 7, and 8. And Paul has much to say on the issue of Christian living, which must be in harmony with the law, in chapter 12 up to chapter 16. But here, in this passage, he is not dealing with the subjective experience of the Christian. He is dealing with the truth of the

righteousness of God which justifies us apart from the works of the law. So the context won't allow you to give you that interpretation.

Let us look at the second problem, historically. What do I mean that this interpretation disagrees historically? Well, it is impossible. I am going to make a statement first, and I will explain it, because I know that many will misunderstand me just making the statement: "It is impossible for you and me to establish the law."

Now I do not mean by that it is impossible for you and me, by the grace of God, to keep the law. I am not discussing that. We will come to that when we come to the sections on sanctification and the sections on Christian living. What I am saying here, and what Paul is saying here, is that it's impossible for you and me, and it has never happened in the history of the human race, or in the history of the Christian church, where any believer has established the law.

Now to explain that. What do I mean? What

does Paul mean when he uses the word establish? It means that the law is totally and fully satisfied with you. When every demand of the law on you has been satisfied, then and then only you have established the law. And that is impossible. I'll tell you why folks. The law demands two things from you and me. Not one, but two things:

1. The law demands perfect righteousness from you and me.
2. Because we are sinners, the law demands from you and me justice. Now it is true, Paul says in Romans 8:4 that [beginning at the end of verse 3]:

And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

If we walk in the Spirit, the righteousness of the law can be fulfilled in us. But the righteousness of the law is not the justice of the

law. The justice of the law is that [Eze. 18:4 & 20]:

The soul who sins is the one who will die.

And the death that the law demands from you and me as sinners is not the first death, it's good-bye to life forever. Therefore, it is impossible to meet the justice of the law and still live because, when you die the second death, that's the end of you.

So there are two requirements that the law demands from each one of us. If you fail to fulfil those two requirements, you cannot establish the law, the law will condemn you, you're still under the curse. But in Christ the law has been established. Christ met on behalf of all people the two demands. By His perfect life, He has met the positive demand of the law, which the Bible calls the righteousness of the law. And, by His death, He has met the justice of the law, so that, in the doing and the dying of Christ, the law has been established. That is what Paul is saying in verse

31. I'll come back to it.

Let's go to number three: grammatically. You see, the word "faith" is the key state word in this verse, 31:

Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith?
[Some translations read: Do we then make void the law through faith?]

Now the word "faith" has more than one meaning in the New Testament. Paul is not saying here, "Do we then make void the law through our faith?" He is not discussing the believer's faith, which is one of the key definitions of faith in the New Testament. But he's not discussing that, because, in the original, which is not in the English [translations of the] Bible, in the original, the word "faith" is preceded by the definite article. So what Paul says here is:

Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith?
[Some translations read: Do we then make void the law through the faith?]

When he uses the word faith with the definite article, it can have more than one meaning. I want to give you an example of what it can mean before I turn to this verse. Turn your Bibles to a very important passage, Galatians chapter 3, the passage that brought a tremendous controversy, not only in the Christian church, but in ours, 100 years ago. Galatians chapter 3, and I want to look at two verses, 23 and 25. And here Paul does the same thing. He uses the word faith with the definite article. I read in verse 23:

Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.

Now what is Paul saying in verse 23? The word “faith” here is not applying to the believer’s faith but to the object of faith, which is Jesus Christ. So what Paul is saying here in Galatians 3:23 is: “Before Christ came, historically, before He came to this world, before Christ came and redeemed us by His life and death, the human race

was kept in prison. We were all in death row legally before Christ came.”

In other words, even Enoch and Moses, even Elijah, had no right to be in heaven. But they were there because of a promise. If Christ had failed to keep that promise, they would have to come down and die. But the fact is that, legally, the whole world was in prison, sentenced to eternal death, until the faith of Christ came. That is why Paul says in Galatians 3, verses 24-25:

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

In verse 23, the faith had not come; in verse 25, He had already come. But after the faith had come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law [or “under the schoolmaster,” as some translations read] because Christ has set us free.

So the word faith in Galatians 3 does not refer

to the believer's faith, but to the object of the believer's faith, which is Jesus Christ.

With this in mind, let's go to Romans 3. How then does Paul use the word "faith" in verse 31 of chapter 3? Well, the context tells us here that he is discussing the doctrine of Justification by Faith. He has told us in verse 28 that the righteousness of God which justifies us by faith is apart from the law. That means our keeping of the law does not contribute towards the righteousness which justifies us. But the question in verse 31 is, "What about God's righteousness? Does God's righteousness satisfy the law?" In other words, is God righteous when He justifies us sinners? Can His righteousness stand up with the law in the judgment? The answer is yes.

In other words, what Paul is defending here is, once again, the legal framework of the atonement. That's why, if we destroy the legal framework of the atonement, which some of our theologians are trying to do, we have destroyed one of the key passages, one of the key teachings of the New

Testament.

Let me ask you a question. If you stand before the judgment seat of God today, and the law says to you, “Have you obeyed me?” What are you going to say?

“Well, we have been taught that the law no longer applies.”

And God will say, “Who told you that?”

“Well, some theologian with a Ph.D.”

And God will say, “Since when was he your Saviour?”

The Bible is the measuring stick of truth. And the Bible says [Heb. 9:22]:

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

On the cross, Jesus met the justice of the law. And, by His life, He met the positive demands of the law. And when I stand before the judgment seat of God, and the law of God says to me, “Have you obeyed me?” I will not say to the law, “Well, I did my best.”

The law says, “I did not ask that question.”

“Well, I kept most of the law.”

The law will say, “I did not ask you that question either. Have you obeyed me in every detail?”

“Well, I goofed up a few times.”

And the law says, “I’m sorry, you must die. Once is enough.”

But I thank God I will not answer the law that way. I will say, “Yes, I have obeyed you perfectly.”

The law will say, “When did you obey me perfectly?”

“When I was in Christ. Then I had perfect obedience.”

But the law will say, “You’re a sinner, you must die.”

And I will say to the law, “Well I have bad news for you, I have already died.”

The law will say, “When did you die?”

I will quote to the law Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live....

The law will say, “Well, if that’s your position, then you are free to live.”

And I will say to the law, “Thank you.”

Because, in Christ, the law has been established on behalf of you and me. That is what verse 31 says. God doesn't bypass His law to justify us. God holds His integrity to His law when He justifies me through His Son Jesus Christ. Because, in His Son's holy history, God has met every demand of the law for you and for me. That is the "good news" of the Gospel.

Now I would like to emphasize this because it is extremely important for a Christian to realize this. I'll tell you why. It is impossible — and I repeat, it is impossible — for you and me to experience genuine sanctification if we have not understood justification. It is like trying to produce oranges out of an apple tree. The ground of our sanctification is Justification by Faith.

I'll tell you why it's impossible. Hebrews 2:15:

...and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Because Hebrews 2:15 tells me that I am a

slave; I was born that way. I am a slave to the fear of death. Every human being has a fear of dying. Even the atheist is scared to die when the time comes. And that's why there's a saying, "There are no atheists in foxholes," because they're scared to die.

Now the thing is this, unless God delivers me from that fear, it is impossible for me to experience the love of God. In other words, it is impossible for you and me to live the Christian life. It is impossible for you and me to keep the law if we are still slaves to fear.

Because God doesn't look at the act, He looks at the heart. The moment you do the right act for the wrong reason, God looks at that as filthy rags.

How can God produce a people who can serve Him without fear or without a desire for reward? It is only when He has established them in Justification by Faith, and has given them peace! And if you have no peace today, if you are not sure that in Christ you stand perfect before His law,

there is no way that God can liberate you from the fear of death. Because there is only one way: through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. And Hebrews 2:14,15 says so:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

So please, there is a vital issue here. I'm saying this and I'm emphasizing this because of one reason: I have discovered in my almost 25 years of the Adventist Church that most Adventists are very insecure about their salvation. Am I correct? Or do I have some different people here? And because we are insecure, it is very hard for this denomination to send missionaries in countries where their lives are in danger, very difficult. We closed our Middle East College. Why? Because it got too hot there. We had difficulties finding doctors for Uganda. Why? Because life was on the block the moment you stepped in this country,

under Idi Amin. Why are we scared? Because we cannot say with Paul [Philippians 1:21]:

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Can you say that from the heart? If you can, then you are not afraid to die.

I remember visiting a couple in Andrews [University] when I was on furlough there. They knew I was from Kenya and they were going to be sent to Kandou Hospital (and my son was born there) and the wife said to me, “Are there snakes there?”

I had two choices: to lie to her or to tell her the truth. I said, “Yes, I’m afraid there are many snakes at Kandou.”

She asked, “Are they poisonous?”

What could I say? There are mambas there, both black and green. There are spitting cobras there. There are gaboon vipers there. I said,

“Well, sister, there are some very poisonous snakes there, but I do not know of a single missionary who has died by snakebite at Kandu Hospital.”

She turned to her husband and said, “Well, there’s always a first time. We better not accept the call.”

Are you afraid to die? I’m not talking about physically, because human beings are human beings. But inwardly, in the spirit, can you say, “For me to die is profit”? Unless we have that peace, God can’t use us to lighten this earth with His glory.

In 1980, [Anwar] Sadat was assassinated in Egypt. The speaker was from this country. He was scared to go there — it was a week later after the assassination — because life was now terrible. People were being killed in Egypt because of the assassination, especially Americans. And we had no speaker. They tried and they tried, and finally I got a call from Beirut (I was in Kenya) and they said, “Would you go please?”

I said, “Sure.”

I remember my missionary friends saying to me, “You are a fool.”

I asked, “Why?”

“Why are you risking your life?” they said.

I said, “Look, the only person who risks his life is a person who has not died. But I’m already dead.” And I gave them Colossians 3:3:

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

We are dead, and our life is hid in Christ. And nobody can kill that life, because it is eternal.

Do you believe that, in Christ, you stand perfect before God? Do you believe that if a person comes and shoots you now, heaven is yours not because you’re good or not because you’re

living in the Christian life, but because in Christ the law has been established?

Justification by Faith is the greatest message the world needs, because men are living in fear, in insecurity. The only hope that we can give them is that the law has been established by the doctrine of Justification by Faith.

That is why it is impossible for me and for Paul to talk about sanctification, or to talk about Christian living, unless he has first established us in the truth of Justification by Faith.

It is my prayer that you remember one thing: that you have a peace that your country and your money and your food cannot give you. It is only in Jesus Christ. And I want you to share this peace with those who don't have it.

You know, I travel around here and I see all these wonderful homes and I ask myself, "How many of them have peace? How many of them are churchgoers?" Do people know that Jesus Christ

has established the law for us? That, in Him, we can look at the law without blinking and realize that in Christ the law doesn't condemn us, the law justifies us.

I want to give you three facts:

1. God is on your side.
2. Jesus is on your side.
3. His law is on your side.

The only one that is against you is the Devil, and he has no way to knock you down if you are established in Justification by Faith.

Let us remember that, when you and I stand before the Investigative Judgment, God doesn't have that investigation so that He might find out whether you and I deserve to go to heaven by our performance. No, the purpose of the Investigative Judgment is to vindicate our Justification by Faith by our Advocate, Jesus Christ. And I know what Christ will say to Satan in that judgment [Zech. 3:2]:

The Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?”

This is what Paul is saying to us [Romans 3:21]:

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Is Justification by Faith able to stand up against the law of God? The answer is yes! The law has been established in the holy history of Jesus Christ. And this is the greatest news that you and I can ever accept.

It is my prayer that you will rejoice in Jesus Christ as your Righteousness, a righteousness that fully established the law in every demand.

In the meantime, read Romans 4. I’m going to cover the whole of chapter 4 in one study. I’m

doing it because I don't want to stretch Romans too long. I know some people get weary, but it's a wonderful book. In Romans 4, Paul defends Justification by Faith against three arguments: works, circumcision, and the law. And we need to understand what he's doing here. He's defending what he says in verse 31.

May God help us that we may rejoice, we will have peace, and from now onward we will no longer be worried, "Will I make it to heaven?" That matter has been settled. From now onward [Philippians 1:21]:

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

And if I have to die in that process, don't worry, folks, it's only sleeping. I don't know about you, I enjoy sleeping, until the resurrection when I shall see my Lord. And I will say, "Thank God for such a salvation as this!" May God bless us.

Chapter 8

In Defense of Justification by Faith

(Romans 4:1-25)

Let's recap what we've covered about Justification by Faith.

1. Paul defined the gospel as the righteousness of God. He did this in his introduction in Romans 1:16 and 17, and now in his definition of the gospel in chapter 3:21 he says:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

The gospel is the righteousness of God. This means it is all of God's doing. He planned it, He performed it, and He makes it available to us without any human contribution. It's all of God.

That's in verse 21 of Romans 3.

2. This righteousness, which God has obtained not only for us, but for all people, is made effective, becomes yours, by faith alone. You can't earn it by your works, and you cannot buy it with your money. It is made effective by faith alone apart from anything else. And that's in verse 22, and verses 28-30. Hence, for this reason it is called, justification or righteousness (the two words are synonymous in Greek), it is called justification or righteousness by faith.

3. This Justification by Faith is the only way to be saved. Oh, there are many other methods that are taught in the world today, but this is the only method, this is the only way, mankind can be saved, whether you're a Jew or a Gentile, whether you lived in the Old Testament times or whether you live in the New Testament times. God is One, and He has only one way of saving man, it is through Justification by Faith.

4. Justification by Faith qualifies you and me

for heaven, now, and in the judgment. Because the word justification is a legal term. It's a term that is applied to those a judge acquits in a case. Justification by Faith is the only way that qualifies you and me for heaven now and in the judgment. That's in verse 24, and also in Isaiah 55:1,2 because, further, it is freely and graciously bestowed.

Then what about sanctification? Sanctification is the fruits of Justification by Faith. Will sanctification not be used in the judgment? Yes. But never as the means of justification, but as the evidence of justification. Never forget that.

5. Because of the redemption in Christ, the righteousness of God is not only a promise, it's a historical reality. It is ours because of the doing and dying of Christ, or as the Bible puts it, as Paul puts it [Romans 3:24]:

...And [all] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

God is legally just in justifying us sinners. God doesn't "make believe" our righteousness, He is legally just in declaring us sinners righteous in Christ. And that is extremely important, Paul defends it, points it out, in verses 24-26. And by the way, Hebrews 9:22-26 brings this out also. By the doing and dying of Christ, God has a legal right, He can uphold His law and, at the same time, justify us.

6. Justification by Faith leaves no room for boasting, for human boasting, for man's boasting. Why? Because we have not contributed one iota towards it; it is entirely by grace, God's doing. We don't deserve it, we haven't earned it, we don't contribute to it, not even our faith contributes to it. Therefore, it's entirely God's doing; therefore, there is no boasting, as far as man is concerned.

Now is there no boasting? Yes, there is boasting, but only in God. That's why I've given 1 Corinthians 1:30,31. But Romans 3:27 says there is no boasting, because faith, Justification by Faith means that I am justified by what God has done,

not by what I have done. Faith is never contributing towards our justification, it simply is accepting. We are saved by faith or we are saved through faith, but never because of faith.

7. Justification by Faith fully satisfies or establishes the law. Now folks, we must be clear on this. The righteousness of God that justifies us, which is made effective by faith, fully establishes the law. Not because of sanctification. Our keeping the law, which is the fruits of Justification by Faith, doesn't establish the law. It is what Christ did that establishes the law. It is His life, it is His death that met all the demands of the law. You and I can never establish the law. Yes, it is possible, through the indwelling spirit, it is possible, as we walk by the Spirit, for the righteousness of the law to be fulfilled in us, but never to establish it. Because to establish the law you have to meet every demand of the law, not only it's positive demands, but also its justice. And the justice of the law says [Eze. 18:4 & 20]:

The soul who sins is the one who will die.

None of us can die the second death and still live. So please remember, it is only Christ Who has established the law. When we preach Justification by Faith we are not doing away with the law, we are upholding the law, because in Christ we stand perfect before the law of God, both in its demands, in terms of positive demands, as well as in its justice.

This is the fundamental definition of Justification by Faith. It has fruits, which we shall see in the next study. But, wherever Paul preached this folks, wherever he did it during his ministry, he came under fire. And in chapter 4 he is still dealing with Justification by Faith. He has not yet moved to sanctification, he will do that in chapter 6. But in Romans 4 he is defending Justification by Faith against the three-fold opposition that he faced in his ministry.

This opposition came mainly from the Judaizers, these Jewish Christians who followed him everywhere, who “bugged” him everywhere.

What was the three-fold opposition? Let me give it to you in a nutshell and then we'll go into detail:

1. The first opposition was works. That's found in verse 1 through verse 8 of Romans chapter 4. The Jewish Christians were demanding, were insisting, that our works were essential for our Justification by Faith. Now let me clarify, what they meant was: God requires us to do good works in order to be saved. Paul is meeting this objection. Because He said, "We are justified without works, only by faith."
2. Number two, which was something very important to the Jews, but we can apply it to ourselves in a different form, was circumcision. Circumcision was very important to the Jew, it meant everything to them. The Jewish Christians, these Judaizers, were insisting that you cannot be saved unless you are circumcised. And that, Paul is dealing with in verse 9 to verse 12.

3. Then, in verse 13 to verse 16 or 17, Paul is dealing with this third element, this third objection, which we can apply today, and that is the keeping of the law. The Jewish Christians were saying, “Yes, it is not enough simply to believe, we must keep the law in order to be saved.”

In other words, the Judaizers were saying that works are essential for justification, circumcision is a requirement for salvation, and the keeping of the law is necessary if you are to be saved. And to all these three Paul says, “No!”

Now before I go any further, I want to say something very important: Paul is not against works, he is for it. He is not even against circumcision; He circumcised Timothy. And he is not against the keeping of the law, he is for it. He'll say much about it, in chapter 13 of Romans. Then what is the problem here? The problem is these three things are never to be used as a means of salvation. He is for it as a way of life. He is against it as a means of salvation. That's the issue

here.

I want you to be clear, so I'm going to give you two texts. These two texts are just an example of how Paul relates works in terms of our salvation and in terms of Christian living. You will notice that he makes it very clear in Ephesians 2, and I'm going to read three verses, and you will notice in these three verses the word "works" appears twice — once in the negative and once in the positive. Ephesians 2:8-10:

For it is by grace [God's doing] you have been saved, through faith [that is, faith makes that salvation effective] — and this not from yourselves [you did not and I did not contribute one iota towards that salvation], it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

By the way, there is much confusion with that word "it" ("it is by grace...."). In the Greek, the

grammar implies the word “it” refers to grace and not to faith. The salvation that comes to us by grace is a gift of God. Our works do not contribute towards that gift that saves us, that grace that saves us, “so that no one can boast.” So please remember, Paul is very clear: our works are not the means of, nor do they contribute towards our justification. But now look again at verse 10:

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

So Christ didn’t only save us to have a ticket to heaven, but He created us, or recreated us in His Son, God did that, that we may do good works. Please notice that it is the fruits, and that is the fruits of Justification by Faith which we will cover in this lesson. But one more text: Titus 3:4,5 and 8. In chapter 3, verses 1, 2, and 3 (especially verses 2 and 3), he talks about us as we are: sinners, disobedient, and so on. Now look at verses 4-5:

But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done [it isn't because we did something good that deserves salvation], but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit....

Having told us the good news, he continues in verse 8:

This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good....

Now please notice that he is talking now to believers who have already experienced Justification by Faith. He's saying, "Now that you believe, you who believe in God should be careful to do good works."

Have you got that? On the one hand, our works do not save us one iota, it doesn't even contribute.

On the other hand, genuine Justification by Faith always produces good works. It is the evidence of Justification by Faith. Here's the last part of verse 8:

These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Please notice, they may not be profitable to you; they are profitable to other people. In other words, the good works of the Christian church should always be a blessing to humanity. If you look at the history of the world today, much of the blessings that have come to this world we take for granted. You take education, schools. Who were the ones who first introduced schools? The Christian church. Who were the ones who were behind all the wonderful social work in this country, like welfare? It began with men and women who were controlled by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I want you to remember that Paul is not discussing works, He is not discussing

circumcision, He is not discussing the keeping of the law as the fruits of justification, but he's discussing this thing as the means of justification. Paul is against salvation by faith plus works, but he is for salvation by faith that works, two different things.

So please remember the context in which we are discussing Romans four. Paul will have much to say about works, he will have much to say about sanctification, and about Christian living, and about keeping the law. We will come to that as we go on to chapter 6 onwards. But here he's talking of how a man is justified before God. And it is by faith alone! Our works, circumcision... (Do you want to add baptism to it? Because we don't practise circumcision today [in the Christian church]. But in Colossians 2, Paul tells us that baptism and circumcision are synonymous in their meaning.) So our works, our baptism, and our keeping of the law do not contribute towards our justification.

That is the issue. So please, I want nobody

here to say, “Pastor Sequeira is saying we don’t have to do any works, we don’t have to keep the law.” I am not saying that, neither is Paul. He is defending the doctrine of Justification by Faith, alone, as our standing before God. With this clear, let us go on and look at it in detail.

Since Paul is dealing with the Jews, he has to use somebody who was very special to the Jews: Abraham. Abraham was the father of the Jews. Now, in the western world, the father simply is somebody who produced you. But in the eastern mind, in the mind of the Jews, a father was more than somebody who was instrumental in bringing you into this world. He was your example, he was your prototype. Please remember that. Put yourself in the Jews’ shoes. To the Jew, Abraham was their father; he meant everything to them. So he’s using Abraham as a model. Romans 4:1:

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? [Some translations read: What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the

flesh?]

“What is Abraham meaning to us?” is the question. Now the statement I want you to look at in verse 1 is that expression or that phrase “pertaining or according to the flesh.”

What did Paul mean by the word “flesh”? In English, the word “flesh” means the soft part of the body. Paul was not referring to the soft part of Abraham. What did Paul mean by the word “flesh”? Well, he means “the natural man.” The best example, the best explanation I can give you of the word “flesh” is in Philippians 3. Let’s see how Paul defines the word flesh, because we need to understand what the phrase means. It does not mean the soft part of the human body. That’s not how Paul is using it here. It does mean that in some places, but not here.

So in Philippians 3, Paul uses the word “flesh” in the same way as Paul uses it in Romans 4:1. Now you will notice something in verse 3. I’m going to read verse 3 to 6 in Philippians 3. You

will notice that Paul is not against circumcision, because in verse 3 he says:

For it is we [i.e., believers] who are the circumcision....

So Paul is not against circumcision as a truth. He's against circumcision as a means of salvation.

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh....

So what is circumcision? Depending on God and not on us. That's why Jeremiah says in chapter 4 [verse 4]:

Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts....

And Moses says in chapter 10, verse 16 of Deuteronomy:

Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not

be stiff-necked any longer.

“Circumcise your hearts” means “remove unbelief, remove the flesh.”

Paul says, “We rejoice in Christ and have no confidence in the flesh.” Then, in verse 4, and 5, and 6 he defines what he means by the word “flesh”:

...Though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

“If you are depending on yourself for your salvation, I want you to know, Philippians, that I have more confidence than you.” What did he mean by that?

He gives his history now in verse 5, and that's what he means by the flesh:

1. He says, "I was circumcised the eighth day."

"How many of you Gentiles," he says, "were circumcised on the eighth day? I was not only circumcised according to the law of Moses, but I was circumcised the eighth day, too!"

2. "I am a pure-blooded Hebrew. I have a pedigree. No mixed blood in me. I am of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews. So, regarding Abraham, I can claim to have 100 percent of his blood, his genes."

3. "Concerning the law, I was a Pharisee."

Now the word "Pharisee" today means something negative. But please remember, the word "Pharisee" means somebody who was very zealous for keeping the law in

every detail. If he were living today he would belong to the “holiness club.” We would call him a “Holy Joe.” That’s what the word Pharisee meant to the people in Paul’s day.

So I was zealous of the law, Paul says. Verse 6:

...As for zeal [i.e., zeal for God], persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

Please remember one thing: even though Paul persecuted the Christian church, his motive was never bad. He really thought he was serving God when he persecuted the Christian church. So his heart was right, and God knew that, that’s why He met him on the Damascus Road. His actions were wrong.

Keep this in mind, because, I’ll tell you, many Sunday-keeping Christians have a

right heart. They're actions may be wrong but their heart is right, maybe righter than some of us, if I can use that word.

Paul's zeal for God led him to persecute the church. He thought he was doing God a favor.

4. "Concerning the righteousness of the law (which to him meant the rules and regulations his church gave him), he was blameless."

Of course, when he goes to verse 7 onwards, he says:

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. [Some translations read: All these things which I attained in the flesh, I gave them up for Christ.

So what does Paul mean by the word flesh? What does he mean when he says:

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?

Flesh means whatever is true of you in terms of your birth, in terms of your genealogy, in terms of your background, in terms of your performance, whatever is true of you, that you are depending on, either partially or wholly, for your salvation. That is the word “flesh.”

If you come to me and say, “I am the great, great granddaughter of Ellen G. White,” I will say, “So what?” That doesn’t give you any extra privilege before God, folks. The fact that you’re a Seventh-day Adventist, you belong to the Remnant people does not give you an extra position before God. The fact that you are keeping the Sabbath doesn’t make you a better child. What about Abraham? Look at Romans 4, verse 2:

If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about — but not before God.

Now let us be honest, did Abraham do works? Did he obey God when God said to him, “Leave your country, leave your people, and go to a land that I will give you”?

Did Abraham obey God? By the way, that was works. He didn't have a Mercedes-Benz to go to Israel, he had to walk, or go on a camel. I don't know how many of you have ridden a camel. It's a world of difference between riding a camel and riding a horse. It's bad enough riding a horse if you don't know how. I'm talking from experience. But have you ever tried riding a camel? It's not only moving up and down but from side to side. I'm talking of getting seasick, or “camelsick.” You try it. My wife tried it. I took her once to Egypt and put her on a camel and she lost some of the color of her hair, it turned grey. It was hard; it was not easy. Maybe for the youth, it's okay, you know.

Abraham did a lot of works, a lot of works, much more than we do. When the church sends us to the mission field today, they give us a freight

allowance, they give us all kinds of allowances. We can take this plastic food from Worthington and Loma Linda with us so that we can enjoy American food while we are in the mission field. But when God sent Abraham to Israel, He gave him no furlough, He gave him no allowances, and Hebrews 11:8 says:

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.

But when we go, we ask the General Conference [the Seventh-day Adventist Church World Headquarters], “Is there a refrigerator where we’re going? Is there electricity there, and is there this, and is there that?”

Abraham did many works, but did those works contribute towards his justification? Paul says, “No. If it did then I can boast, ‘I obeyed God, therefore I have a right to go to heaven.’” Romans 4:3:

What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Now, verse 4:

Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation.

If, at the end of the month, you go to pick up your salary for which you worked, and your boss says, “By the way, this is a gift from me,” I know what you will say: “You need your head examined; I worked for this! If you don’t give it to me as a wage I will take you to court!”

That’s what Paul is saying here. If Abraham worked for his justification, then it would be no longer by grace. God owed it to him. That’s what the word means. Verse 5 says:

However, to the man who does not work....

Did Abraham work? Yes. Did Abraham work for his justification? No!

However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Abraham was justified by faith without works. Did he do works? Yes, plenty of works. But only as fruits of Justification by Faith, never as the means.

Now Paul adds in verse 6 and 7 and 8 a very important person besides Abraham, because, besides Abraham, the Jews had somebody very high in their thinking, who was a friend of God, who was a man after God's heart. That is David, David the King. Paul is saying David was justified the same way that Abraham was justified. These two men were justified in the same way that I am teaching you in Romans how we are justified before God. I read in verse 6:

David says the same thing when he speaks of

the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works.

How plain could it be? I'm not squeezing my ideas into the text. The text is plain; it doesn't even need explanation. It's clear. And then he quotes from Psalm 32:1,2:

Blessed [which means happy] are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.

Folks, here you are justified by faith. If you are you are blessed, you can be happy.

Now, having made it clear that works do not contribute towards our justification, Paul turns to circumcision. Verse 9:

Is this blessedness [the blessings of Justification by Faith] only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as

righteousness.

“Do we need to be circumcised in order to be justified? Or do we need to be circumcised in order for us to be accepted before God, and be saved?” The Judaizers were saying, “Yes.” Remember, I was going to give you a text? I’ll give it to you now. Turn to Acts 15. Is Paul against circumcision? No. He circumcised Timothy. He spoke of circumcision in Philippians 3 in a positive way. He does the same thing in Colossians 2, but now, here it is, Acts 15: the first “General Conference” of the Christian church. What was the issue? Almost the same as 1888. Here it is. Chapter 15 of Acts, verse 1:

Some men came down from Judea [that means they were Jews] to Antioch and were teaching the brothers [the believers there]: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”

Please notice that the issue is not circumcision. The issue is circumcision as an essential

requirement for salvation.

Does Paul say, “You know, you Jewish brethren, I think you have a point”? No. Listen to verse 2 of Acts 15:

This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them....

Paul did not take this sitting down, neither did Barnabas. Now Barnabas was a very mild fellow. Paul, I can see, was aggressive. He had the short man’s complex, you know. (They tell me he was short.)

But here are Paul and Barnabas, they would not give in. They fought with all they could. Finally, the brethren said, “Let’s take this matter to the General Conference.” And they did. So you have the first Jerusalem Council beginning in verse 6. What was the argument? Here it is in verse 5:

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees....

These were Jewish Christians, but were still zealous for the law. We still have them today in our church. Nothing wrong with being zealous for the law, but we must be zealous for the law in the right way. That's my issue, that's Paul's issue here. These Pharisees were zealous for the law in the wrong way. What were they saying? Look at what they were saying in verse 5:

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."

That is, besides circumcision, they must keep all the law, both ceremonial and moral in order to be saved. They said it's required to be saved.

So the argument was: is it required? What side did the leading brethren take? If you read the rest of Acts 15, you will discover that Peter and James, the pillars of the church, said, "Paul is right. We must not put on these Gentile Christians a burden

that we could not carry ourselves, neither could our fathers.”

So Paul is saying here, in Romans 4, that circumcision does not contribute towards our salvation, neither does baptism. It is the outward confession of our faith. Then Paul says, “Why then? I know what you will say, Jewish Christians. Why did God give circumcision if it does not have anything to do with our salvation?” And here Paul says, “There was a reason why God gave circumcision.” It’s in Romans 4, verse 11:

And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.

Why did God give circumcision? It was a sign. It was a seal. The word “seal” means to confirm, to authenticate something that is already there. To confirm something, to confirm a fact, you put a

seal on it: “This is it.” What was the fact?
Justification by Faith.

I want to pause here, because there is coming a time that before God lets loose the four winds of strife, before this church, the Christian church is plunged into the great Time of Trouble, God’s people have to be sealed. We, as a church, teach that the sign of that seal is the Sabbath, and I believe we are right, if we understand the Sabbath correctly.

So what I want to do in the next few moments is to use circumcision as a model of the seal of God, because we must apply it in the same way to the Sabbath in the last days. How and why was circumcision a seal of the righteousness of faith?

To understand this, you need to have the background. The call of Abraham is found in Genesis 12, the first 4 verses:

The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people, and your father’s household

and go the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he set out from Haran.

God comes to Abraham and says, “Look, I want you to leave your family, your country to the land I will give you. I will make you into a great nation, and in you, Abraham, I will bless the whole world.” That was the promise of salvation to Abraham. And, of course, John 8:56 tells us that:

Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.

How old was Abraham when the promise was made? He was 75 years old, Genesis 12:4 makes it clear. But he had no children. How could God bless the world, how could God make him a great nation when he had not even one son? So God

promises him a son. In that promise was a son.

Eight years went by. Now it takes human beings nine months to produce a child. But now eight years went by and no son had come. So in chapter 15 of Genesis, Abraham's faith begins to dwindle. It begins to waiver. And God says to Abraham, "Why are you fearful?" (which, in the Hebrew language, means, "Why are you doubting my promise?").

Abraham said, "God, it's because you have not kept your promise. The only son I have in my household (which to the Jew was the extended family) is this boy of Eliezer my slave. Is he the promised son?"

And God said, "No. The son I promised you will come out from your loins." And he took him for a walk. When you have problems with God, go for a walk with him. God said, "Abraham, look at the stars." Of course, in the Middle East, it doesn't rain very much, and we have many clear skies. And God said, "Count the stars."

Abraham said, “Lord, even if I had a Ph.D. in computer science, impossible.”

“That is how many children you have,” said God to Abraham. And there you have that famous statement that Paul loves, that he quotes more than once in the New Testament, Genesis 15:6:

Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

There was no evidence. He didn't have even one son, but he believed God that he would have millions of children, when he had, in actual fact, not even one child. That is faith.

Two years later, chapter 16 of Genesis, Sarah comes to Abraham, “Yes, you are depending on God, but I think what God expects is for you to do your part. And since you, Abraham, cannot produce a child through me, I will give you permission to go to my slave woman, and produce a child.” Which was a common practice in those

days. Surrogate motherhood is not something new; the method is new, but the system is not new.

Abraham said, “Yes, Sarah, I think you are right.” Because now it is ten years, because as I read verse 3 and verse 16 of chapter 16 of Genesis, I discover that he is 85 years old when Sarah comes up to him, and he’s 86 years old when Ishmael is born.

Ten years after the promise, Abraham commits an act of unbelief. He is not trying to be bad or sinful, he’s trying to help God to keep His promise. That’s all he’s doing. So Abraham says to God, “Here is your promised son.”

And God says, “Nothing doing.”

Do you know how long God waited after that? Fourteen more years. Talk about patience! God waited 14 more years after that incident. Going to the next chapter, chapter 17, now Abraham is 99 years old — that’s 14 years later — and God says something to Abraham. I want you to notice what

He says. This is one text I want to read, Genesis 17:1, because we hear this word very often, but we use it in the wrong context, so I want you to look at this word in the right context. You will notice it's part and parcel of the wonderful truth of justification, or righteousness by faith. Please notice his name. He is not yet Abraham, he is Abram. It is only after circumcision that he is called Abraham. Genesis 17:1:

When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless...."

Blameless in performance, or blameless in faith? That's the issue. Righteousness, whether imputed or imparted, is God's part. My part, from beginning to end, is faith. God is saying to Abraham, "Your faith has not been matured, it has not yet reached perfection. I want you to be perfect in your faith."

Abraham said, "What must I do to be perfect?"

“I want you to be circumcised. Remove all doubt. Remove unbelief.” That’s the meaning of circumcision. And so in verse 9, 10, and 11, God gave him the covenant of circumcision, as a token. You’ll find that word, “token” (or “sign”) in verse 10. Genesis 17:10-11:

This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign [the King James version uses the word “token”] of the covenant between me and you.

In other words, “From now onwards, Abraham, it is by faith alone that you must walk.”

And Abraham said, “Yes.”

By the way, 17 years later, that faith that was sealed was tested. Abraham passed it. The test was terrible. Hebrews 11:17:

By faith Abraham, when God tested him

offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son....

“Take this son, in whom I promise salvation, and kill him.”

And Abraham, by faith, obeyed God because he believed that, “If he gave me a son when I couldn’t produce it (scientifically, medically, humanly, whatever way you want to put it), I believe that he can raise this son from the dead. I will sacrifice him.” Folks, when your faith is sealed, we will be tested also.

Circumcision did not save him. It was only a sign, it was a seal. The Sabbath doesn’t save us. It is a sign, it is a seal. Read Exodus 31:13, because there I read that God also gave the Sabbath as a sign. Exodus 31:12-13:

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the

generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy.’”

Circumcision did not make Abraham righteous. It simply sealed, confirmed, authenticated what was already there: righteousness by faith. It confirmed it now, and from now onward. Abraham made mistakes after that, but he walked by faith alone.

Now read Romans 4:11-12:

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

I want you to notice that, because Abraham was justified by faith, he became “the father of all who

believe” (Romans 4:11), not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. He’s the father of the circumcision (Romans 4:12) and also of the uncircumcision, which is the Gentiles. He’s the father of all who believe, who walk after the faith of Abraham. That is why I want you to put next to these verses Galatians 3:29. Because there Paul tells us that:

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.

But now, what about the law? The argument is the same. Paul says that, just like Abraham was given justification by faith before circumcision, likewise he was justified by faith before God gave the law. In fact, about 400 years after Abraham was justified by faith the law was given. So please remember the law was not given as an added requirement. Then why was the law given? Well, let’s read the text, Romans 4:13-14:

It was not through law that Abraham and his

offspring [that is, to you and me who are believers] received the promise that he would be heir of the world [not the heir of Canaan, but the world, i.e., the earth made new], but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless....

What is Paul saying here? He's saying that legalism — righteousness by works of the law — and justification by faith are two opposite systems. You can't join them; you can't marry them. We are not saved by faith plus works; we are saved by faith that works, but we are saved by faith alone. That faith does produce works, but not a contribution to our justification. The two are opposites. Why? Because the law says, "Do this! Or don't do this if you want to live!" The gospel says, or grace, says, "You are justified by faith apart from works." So they're two opposite systems, you can't marry them, you can't synthesize these two. You are perverting the gospel when you do that. Then in verse 15, he goes on to another point of the law:

...Because the law brings wrath....

In other words, the moment you try to save yourselves by the law, you come under wrath. The moment you save yourself by faith, you come under peace. Why wrath? Because the law says, “If you don’t obey me in every detail, you are condemned.” Look at the rest of verse 15:

And where there is no law there is no transgression.

Paul is a very systematic theologian. He’s very careful in how he chooses his words. What he’s saying here is this: that while everybody sins (he’s not discussing the sins here, he’s discussing the transgression), you can sin without knowing the law. But you can never transgress without knowing the law. Because sin is “missing the mark”; transgression means the willful, deliberate violation of a law. [See *The Biblical Definition of Sin* for more information.]

Paul is saying that, when God gave the law, it turned sin into transgression. It means that it made guilt all the worse, because before you did not know that you were guilty, in many areas. The Arab in Saudi Arabia who breaks the Sabbath doesn't know that he is guilty of breaking God's commandments, the fourth commandment. But the moment you give him the Sabbath law, he becomes guilty because sin has become transgression. Galatians 3:19 brings this out:

What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come....

So God gave the law not to solve the sin problem, but to make you worse. Why? That salvation by faith may become desirable.

So the law doesn't save us; the law makes things worse. In verses 16 and 17 he brings it out in the positive:

Therefore [since the law can't save us], the

promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed — the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.

I love that. My salvation is guaranteed, even though I'm a failure, even though I'm a sinner. Because it is not of works, but is of faith in Jesus Christ. It is guaranteed. And it is guaranteed because Abraham is the father of all those who believe.

How does faith work? Because Paul, having defended justification by faith, does not stop there. He ends chapter 4 — in verse 18 to the end — in how faith works. How does it work in your life? How does it work in my life? How did it work in Abraham's life? Let's read what it says. Romans 4:18:

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”

Have you got it? If you are to be a seed of Abraham, if you are to be a child of Abraham, and, therefore, heir according to the promise, you must have the faith that Abraham had. His faith must be realized in your life. Now how does it work? Romans 4:19-21:

Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead — since he was about a hundred years old — and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God [remember, this is after circumcision], but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

He is convinced about not one, but two things: that what God had promised, He was also able to

perform.

Who does the promising in this text? God. Who does the performance in this text? God. Both were done by God, the promise and the performance. What did Abraham do? Believe. That's all.

Now, the conclusion of Romans 4, verses 22-25:

This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness.” The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness — for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

This is the way that you and I must live. Every believer must allow faith to work in their lives the way it worked with Abraham.

Let me put it in a nutshell: what is faith, how

does it work? Faith is taking God at His word. God tells me, “I created this world in six days.”

I don't say to God, “Please give me scientific evidence.” I don't say that. I don't say to God, “Prove it to me by the scientific method.” I don't say that. Faith doesn't allow that.

Faith says, “I believe that God created this world without any preexisting matter.” Do you believe that?

Abraham's faith was not based on the scientific method. I want to explain what I mean by that, because I'm not against the scientific method. Do you realize that, because of the scientific method, we have such wonderful inventions today? The computer — I don't understand it, but it's amazing — medical science, technology, all these things are the result of the scientific method. But here is the problem: the scientific method only works on the rim of the natural. It is not capable of dealing with the supernatural. Faith deals with the supernatural.

God comes to me and says that, “I created this world in six days, just by My breath, I had no pre-existing matter.” (And Hebrews 11 brings this out.) By faith I believe it. If I were to use the scientific method, I would say, “You are talking nonsense.”

You see, if I depended on the scientific method, I would no longer believe in the miracles of Christ. I would say to you, “Well, you see, what Jesus did is, He hypnotized the people, mass hypnotized the people and made them think the water was wine, or grape juice.”

No, folks, He actually turned water into the fruit of the juice. He actually arose from the dead. The disciples were not inventing the resurrection. He actually performed miracles. All these are supernatural, and I believe it. That is what “faith” is. Faith is taking God at His word.

Abraham never questioned God. He never said, “Show me where in history a woman has

produced a child after she had passed the age of child bearing.” He never said that. He never said to God, “Prove to me scientifically that Sarah is capable of bearing a child now.” Against all hope he believed. He did not even waiver, says Paul. He believed that God was capable of doing the impossible. That is what faith is.

Faith goes beyond the rim of the natural. When God comes to me and says, “If you walk in the Spirit, the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in you,” I don’t question God. Do you believe it, or do you say, “Show me one person who has done it.”

Yes, naturally, impossible. God Himself says, “By the works of the law shall no one be justified.” He says, “There is none righteous.” But we are not talking of the natural, we are talking of Justification by Faith. God comes to you and says, “You are a sinner, but I look at you as if you are perfect in my Son, as if you had never sinned.”

But you say, “I don’t feel righteous.” The

question has nothing to do with your feelings. Do you believe what God says? Do you believe that, by walking in the Spirit, or by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, we can make no provision for the flesh? Do you believe that this sinful flesh can be kept subdued every moment by faith? That is what Abraham's faith was like. He believed the impossible.

Chapter 9

The Fruits of Justification by Faith

(Romans 5:1-5)

To me, Romans 5 is the most important chapter of Romans. Having defined and defended Justification by Faith, in chapter 5 Paul begins the first five verses with the fruits of Justification by Faith. That is what I want to look at now.

What are the fruits? Does Justification by faith bear fruits? The answer is YES: not one, not two, but three. That is how Paul defines it: three fruits. But I want you to be very clear about the sequence of these fruits. You can't exchange them, they follow in the exact sequence that Paul gives them. Because the first fruit is immediate, the second fruit is continuous, and the third fruit is ultimate. This is the order in which we must go. Otherwise, if you try to reach the last fruit without having the

first, you are wasting your time. And you will see why I am saying this.

What are the three fruits? Let me mention first all of the three fruits, and then we will expound on them. The three fruits are found in the first two verses of chapter 5:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

1. The first fruit, the immediate fruit, is peace with God.
2. The second fruit, the continuing fruit, is we are standing under “grace,” which means we have access to the grace of God. That is in the first part of verse 2.
3. The third fruit, or the ultimate fruit, is arriving at the glory of God.

Okay, let's look at them in detail. Now remember that, at the foundation of all these three, is faith, Justification by Faith. Remember that Hebrews 11:6 says:

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

None of these fruits can come through works, or the keeping of the law. NONE. Only by faith. Let's look at the first fruit, the immediate fruit:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace....

But Paul doesn't stop there. He doesn't say that Justification by Faith brings you peace. Because I have no peace with many people. And you may have no peace. We may have no peace with ourselves, we may have no peace with our neighbors, we may have no peace with the

government. I have no peace with the IRS at this time of the year. But Paul is not talking of peace in a general sense. We have no peace in the world today. He is talking about peace with God, and folks, if I have peace with God, everything else doesn't matter. I can take everything in the world as long as I have peace with God. Because if I have peace with God I have a future that nobody can take away from me. My suffering in this world will be only temporary.

What does it mean, "I have peace with God"? First of all, let's look at every phrase here. The first phrase here is "having been justified" or "being justified," as the King James Version puts it. The phrase there, the verb there, is in the first aorist passive; it's an historical tense, something that has already happened.

So Justification is the "work of a moment." We are familiar with that phrase. The moment you believe, the moment you believe, a change takes place in your status, in your standing between you and God. This status change is called

“Justification.” A very good text is John 5:24, the words of Jesus Christ, where He says:

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

“If you really believe in My Father Who sent Me, if you really believe in Me as your Saviour, then you will not come any more under condemnation.” Why? Because “you have passed from death to life, you have passed from condemnation to justification.”

So the word “being justified” is in the aorist, it’s a historical tense, its a past tense. But the second phrase, “We have peace with God,” is not in the past tense. It is not even in the future tense. It is the present continuous tense. The moment you come under the umbrella of Justification by Faith, the moment you come, you have peace from beginning to end; it is a continuous thing, and that is the wonderful thing about Justification by Faith.

That is the first fruit, “Peace with God.”

Let me put it this way, before you and I accepted the gospel, what was our situation with God? Do you remember what Adam and Eve did when they sinned and God was coming? They ran and hid. Why did they hide? Paul tells us why in Romans. In chapter 1, verse 18, Paul says:

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness....

Then again in chapter 2, verses 8 and 9:

But for those who are self-seeking [the opposite of faith] and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile....

This world is full of people who are in anguish. We are told that nine-tenths of our sickness is the

result of guilt and anguish. This world has no peace. That is because they have not discovered the good news of the gospel. But the moment you have believed the gospel and you are now justified, you have peace. Your experience may be up and down, but your relationship to God is peace.

I want to emphasize this for one reason: it is a tragedy when you meet Christians, when you meet Adventists who have accepted the gospel and still have no peace. This is a tragedy. There are too many of us who are trying to reach the ultimate fruit of justification, which is the hope of glory, in order that we may have the first fruit, which is peace. That is not the way of the gospel.

You can never reach the ultimate goal of Justification by Faith unless you first have peace. And if you don't have that peace, you will never reach the ultimate goal, because it is the right sequence that we must follow.

I want to add one more fact about this first fruit. Look at Romans 5, verse one again:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....

Once you are justified by faith (historical or past tense), you have peace continually. But now I want you to notice what is the source of that peace. It doesn't say through our good works or through keeping the Law, but through our Lord Jesus Christ.

What does it mean, "through our Lord Jesus Christ"? It means through the redemption that is in our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, it is the doing and dying of Christ that brings me that peace, not my performance. My performance is up and down; sometimes I have tremendous success and sometimes I fail. Is yours the same? If it isn't, you're kidding yourself. Even when God gives you total victory, you will not know it.

There are times when the devil will come and touch your feelings, and say you are not good

enough to be saved. And you say, “You’re right, I might as well not go to church.” And you stop coming to church, because you have believed the devil. Well, I have news for you: the devil has two qualities:

1. He is a murderer.
2. He is a liar.

You join him and you’ll get both. If you want a text, it’s John 8:44:

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

He’s a murderer and a liar. This, Romans 5:1, is the truth: “that being justified by faith you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” not through what He is doing in you, but through what He has done 2,000 years ago. That is why no one

can rob you of that peace. The only person who can rob you of that peace is yourself when you say good-bye to Christ. That is your privilege. But as long as you are walking by faith under the umbrella of Justification, you have peace with God, continually. And that is the first fruit. Paul goes on in verse 2:

...Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

“Through Whom” or “By Whom” refers to Christ. This same Christ, Who is the source of your peace, this same Christ also makes available to you and also through faith — not by works — this same faith that brought the peace of God to you (and remember what He said to His disciples, “Peace I leave with you, peace that the world cannot give, peace that passes understanding...”), this same peace that comes to you through Christ and is made effective by faith. In the same way, through faith, through Christ “we have access to God’s grace.”

What does he mean by the expression, “this grace”? He is pointing to a specific thing — this grace. Well, we know that when Jesus was in this world He lived a perfect life in His humanity. But, if you read the gospel, if you read the New Testament, if you read Paul very carefully, you will discover that Christ did not do it in His own strength, as a human being, as a man. He did it by the grace of God. Let me give you an example.

The greatest thing that Christ ever did is that He tasted death — not the first death, but the second death — for all people. I say this because even believers die the first death. But the believers will not die the second death, because Christ tasted of it. But I want you to notice how He tasted that death. What gave Him the power? Hebrews 2:9:

But we see Jesus, who was made a littler lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

This grace that made it possible for Christ to fulfill the will of God is now accessible to the believer who is justified by faith. That is what Paul is talking about. In other words, the word “grace” has more than one meaning in the New Testament. The primary meaning of grace, of course, is the loving disposition that God has towards us, through which He sent His Son, so that, through His Son, He could save us. You will find that for example, in Ephesians 1:7:

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace....

But the word “grace” also means the power of God. That is available to the believer who is justified by faith. And I want to give you a whole list of texts, but I would like to warn you, I would like to say something here that is extremely important. We are discussing here the fruits of Justification by Faith. The gospel, which is the righteousness of God, is the good news for every person. Every human being should listen to the

gospel, be told the gospel, because the gospel is the good news for all. But the fruits of Justification by Faith are not for all people. It is only for those who believe.

Please, there is no peace with God unless you are first justified by faith. I would plead with anyone who has not accepted Christ, “Don’t wait, because without faith it is impossible to experience peace.”

So please remember, these fruits that we are discussing here are for those who have entered into the wonderful sunlight of God’s saving grace. And if you have not accepted Christ, I would like you to read Mark 16:15,16 where Christ said:

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved....”

Those are the ones who will receive these fruits.

Now I want to give you the texts regarding grace as the power of God. Let's start with 1 Corinthians 15. I'm using the word grace now as the power of God available to the believer. And I'm going to use all of Paul's writings, because he is the one who uses the word and I want to show you how Paul uses the word grace in terms of power. In 1 Corinthians 15:9 Paul says:

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

In other words, Paul feels that he has no right to be an apostle because of his history. But, there's a "but" there in verse 10:

But by the grace of God I am what I am....

"I am an apostle, not because I deserve it, but because of the grace of God," but he adds on:

...and his grace to me was not without effect [he did not squander that grace]. No, I worked

harder than all of them....

What is another word for labored? Worked. So Paul is not against works. “I worked harder than all of them.” Who are “all of them”? The context tells us that it refers to the other apostles. “I worked more than any other apostle or even all of them put together!” Doesn’t it sound like he’s bragging? Well, it does, so he corrects himself in case you misunderstand him:

...yet not I [don’t give me the credit], but the grace of God that was with me.

Can you see that? It was the grace of God that produced those works. “Because I’m standing in access to that grace. I did not waste that grace, I used it.” God wants you and me to do the same thing. For Jesus said in Matthew 5:16:

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

In other words, “Let your light shine. Let this grace that you have received shine in you and let people see your good works and glorify the Father.”

Okay, turn a few pages to 2 Corinthians, let me give you another one. Chapter 12 and there in verse 7 there is a problem. Paul doesn't tell us what the problem is. Scholars speculate — some say it was his poor eyes, some say that he had defective speech, because he had a cleft lip — but Paul doesn't tell us what the problem is. Paul tells us that he had a problem and why God did not remove it. 2 Corinthians 12:7:

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

You see, Paul was a human being, and he was victim to pride just like you and I are. So God, in order to keep him humble because of the many revelations that had been given him, to stop him

from being proud, was given “a thorn in the flesh.” It came from Satan, allowed by God for the purpose to keep him humble, and he felt that this was affecting his mission. So he prays concerning this; Paul pleaded with God, 2 Corinthians 12:8:

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

“Lord, if you could simply remove this problem I will be a greater worker for you.” And the Lord said, “No way, you’d be a greater worker for yourself. Therefore my answer is this:” [verse 9]

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness....”

“I don’t need your support, Paul. All I need is you. I don’t care how weak you are; my grace is sufficient.” Now let’s go on, because you’ll notice something Paul says:

Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about

my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

“I'll glory in my infirmities, in my inabilities, in my problems.” Why? “So that Christ's power may rest on me.” Here the word “power” is synonymous with the word “grace.” So here the word grace is used in terms of power. Don't come and tell me, “I'm not able to speak to people. I'm a shy person.”

Folks, I'm an introvert, you ask my wife. Maybe I don't sound it from here, but I'll tell you, it took me six months fighting against the call to the ministry, because I'm an introvert. But, by the grace of God, I am what I am. And that grace is available to you, because everyone who is justified by faith is standing in grace, he has access to this grace of God. So there is no excuse why any of us is not witnessing for Christ. Not one excuse. The only excuse is that you are not yet justified by faith. Let me give you two other texts; they are saying the same thing. Ephesians 3:7:

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

1 Timothy 1:14:

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Now, because we are standing under grace, what is our goal? Because Paul says we are standing in grace we have a hope, we can rejoice that we can arrive at the glory of God. And what is the glory of God?

We think of the glory of God in terms of glorification. Now that is true, Paul includes this here. But Paul is not primarily talking here about glorification which will take place at the second coming of Christ, "when this corruption shall put on incorruption." He is talking of another glory, the glory of the character of God. The context is clear.

What is the glory of the character of God? Do you remember John 1:14 where John says:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

It is this glory that Paul is saying we have a hope of arriving at. What was the glory the disciples saw? They saw the self-sacrificing love of God in Him, the “agape” the love that seeketh not her own. It is this glory that Paul is talking about here. He is talking about the same glory that he mentions in Colossians 1:27:

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

What is this glory? It is the love of God, shed abroad in our hearts. Can God produce a people who can love as Christ loved? Jesus said so, He

even commanded His disciples, John 13:34,35:

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

I have much to say about this in the next study, because verses 6 to 10 deal with this. But I want to give you a text that makes this clear. This is the hope that we must keep in mind, this is the goal that God has for every one who is justified by faith. And, of course, this grace comes to us through the Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom [that is, freedom from the flesh, liberty from this slavery to sin]. And we, who with unveiled faces [i.e., no barrier, because we have peace with God] all reflect the Lord's glory [not our glory but the glory of the Lord], are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Let me put it this way. If you remember Romans 3:23, where Paul is talking of both Jews and Gentiles before justification by faith, he's saying two things in Romans 3:23:

...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

He is using the present continuous tense here: "All are continually coming short of the glory of the Lord."

Sin is a terrible thing; it not only deprives you of heaven, it robs you of the glory of God. God created man that he may be His sanctuary. We are ultimately the temple of God, and God wants to dwell in us, and He wants His glory to shine through us. This was His plan for Adam and Eve and for us. But the fall robbed us of the glory of God.

But the wonderful thing is: Justification by Faith doesn't only give us a ticket to heaven, it

doesn't only give us peace between us and God, so that there is no barrier when I come and pray to Him. And the devil says, "You're not good enough to pray."

I say, "You get behind me, because I have a text for you." And that text I will not give you I want you to find it. Because in Christ, we stand righteous. There is no barrier. But more than this, Justification by Faith restores the glory of God in us.

Then in Romans 5:3 he tells us the steps, and, unfortunately, the steps are painful. Because, you see, when Christ lives in me and reveals His glory, I have to say no to the flesh, and that is painful. I will say more on in the next study, but let's look at it. Romans 5:3-4:

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

You see, although the grace of God produces righteousness in you, your natures will always remain sinful. Therefore, there is always this conflict and, when the Holy Spirit conquers and subdues the flesh, you are suffering in the flesh.

These are the steps:

1. sufferings (tribulation),
2. perseverance (patience, endurance),
3. character (some translations read “experience”),
4. hope.

So, because you have Christ in you, your flesh will suffer, because it will be denied its desires. You will endure the temptations of Satan, the doubts, just like Abraham endured. He did not give up His faith even though he had passed the age of childbearing (or, at least, his wife had).

But the ultimate fruit is character. And when the character of God is reproduced, you will not be

disappointed. That is the Greek word in verse 5. (The King James Version says “ashamed.”) Hope does not disappoint because the love of God is shed abroad. That is the wonderful, absolute character of Justification by Faith.

God has a plan where His work is not half-way. Do you realize that God’s purpose in you and me through Justification by Faith is ultimate salvation? And when you have entered into that umbrella of Justification by Faith, your ultimate salvation is guaranteed. As Paul says in Romans 8:30:

...Those he justified, he also glorified.

Our part, from beginning to end, is faith. Never say good-bye to faith, for as long as we are walking by faith, all these three fruits are guaranteed:

1. Peace with God,
2. Your standing in grace, and
3. You have a hope of arriving at the glory of God.

There are too many people in our church, especially the independent ministries, who are concerned about the ultimate fruit, revealing the glory of God, without giving their people peace. We begin with peace. If you don't have that peace, you will never be able to experience the glory of God.

I'll tell you why. Because it is impossible for you to be liberated from the fear, fear of death, fear of judgment, unless you have understood Justification by Faith. And if you have not been liberated from fear, you cannot love. In 1 John 4:17-18, John tells us that:

In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

“Perfect love will cast out fear.” Fear of what?

The judgment, and torment. If you haven't been liberated from the fear of the judgment, I have bad news for you, you can never experience the love of God in your heart. You are always a victim of anguish: "Will I make it?" So it is my prayer that we understand this, the love of God. First of all, the gospel must liberate me from the fear of death, the fear of judgment. I must have peace. Then and then only can I have the second and third fruit. So may God bless us, that you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. May God bless you.

Chapter 10

Unconditional Love

(Romans 5:6-10)

Justification by Faith is three fold:

1. First of all, Justification by Faith brings to us peace with God. This is the first fruit, and do you remember what Paul says in verse 1 of chapter 5?

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....

And that's because our status changes when we accept Christ as our Saviour. God doesn't only forgive us; not only are we reconciled in Christ, but through Jesus Christ we are looked upon by God as if we had never sinned. God looks at you and He looks at me just like He looks at His Son, Jesus Christ. Do you remember what He said about His Son? Matthew 3:17:

And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

And this is exactly what He says to you and me. Because you see, in Justification by Faith, God doesn't look at our performance; He looks at us as we are in His Son. And in His Son we have peace with God. We can call Him “Abba,” Father. That is the first, the immediate fruit of Justification by Faith. It's the first experience. If you don't have that peace, then you haven't understood Justification by Faith, you have not experienced Justification by Faith. But it doesn't stop there.

2. Justification by Faith also brings us the experience of power. Paul tells us in verse 2 that those who are Justified by Faith, this same faith that brings them peace also gives them access to the grace of God. As we saw, that grace is the power of God, power that makes it possible for us to fulfil God's purpose for each one of us. Power that we can withstand temptation, power that we may behave as children of God. And because we

are standing in grace, because we have this power available to us, which the unbeliever doesn't have...

3. ...we have a third experience that God wants each of us to have, and that is to experience the love of God. The ultimate goal of Justification by Faith, is that the love of God may be shed abroad in our hearts, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this third ultimate goal is so radical, so revolutionary, so unlike any human experience, that Paul spends verses 6,7,8,9 and 10 talking about this love of God.

You see, the love of God that is shed abroad in the heart of the believer is unlike any human love, because human love is egocentric. Paul wants us to understand what kind of love is shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is the love of God.

And, as I said, that is so different that he wants to spend a whole passage, verses 6-10, explaining this love. And the way he does it, is not by

comparing, but by contrasting human love. You see, you can't compare human love with God's love. You can contrast it, because the two "loves" are opposite.

In fact, when the New Testament writers described the love of God, they chose a very obscure word in the Greek language, a word that was hardly used in the noun form. They gave it a meaning that they derived from the cross of Christ; that word was "agape." Whereas the highest form of love in the Greek language, according to Plato was "heavenly eros," and the New Testament writers refused to use that word. Not once is the word found in the New Testament.

But in order to understand and to appreciate our passage, I would like first of all to turn to another passage where Paul deals with the same thing, so that you understand the importance of comprehending the love of God. Turn to Ephesians 3 and, as you turn to this third chapter of Ephesians, I would like to give some background.

This is one of Paul's prison letters. He was in a dungeon, he was in prison when He wrote Ephesians. The Ephesian church was very dear to him, he had spent almost three years in Ephesus. But a problem had crept up: the imprisonment of Paul was bringing great discouragement to the Ephesian Christians. This is how they were reasoning: "If Paul — the great servant of God, the Apostle of Christ — was in prison and God was not protecting him, what hope is there for us?" Paul heard about this. So he writes to them, in verse 14 of chapter 3, he is unburdening his concern:

For this reason [that is, because of your discouragement] I kneel before the Father....

Now we need to remember that, in the days of Paul, people normally prayed standing up; kneeling was not a common method of praying. They prayed standing up, their eyes were open, and they often raised their hands to God. But whenever a Jew, whenever a person, in those days was very earnest in their prayer, he would kneel down. Paul

is simply saying to the Ephesians, “I am very earnest in my prayer, and my concern is for you.” And his great burden, his great desire is verse 16 up to verse 19 [of Ephesians 3]:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he [i.e., God] may strengthen you [the Ephesian Christians] with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints [that includes you and me], to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

The only way Christ is strong, the only way your faith is strong, and Christ dwells in you permanently, is when you are rooted and grounded in the love of God, the love of Christ.

He’s using two metaphors, one from botany (deep roots) and one from architecture (strong

foundations). Recently we had a terrible earthquake in Armenia. They are discovering now that the reason that so many of those buildings collapsed — because they've had similar earthquakes in California and the buildings there have withstood those — but the reason they have discovered is that they used cheap materials, the foundations were weak. They were not able to take that shaking. If your knowledge of the love of God is weak, or incomplete, or wrong, you will never be able to stand the crisis. Paul is saying we need to be rooted and grounded in this love.

We cannot come to the knowledge of the love of God simply through human reasoning, or the human rationale, because it's beyond that. The love of God is a complete contradiction of human love. And when we have understood the love of God, when our hearts are filled with the love of God, Paul says, "We are filled with the fullness of God."

That is Paul's concern here in Romans 5. He wants us to understand the love of God, for two

reasons:

1. When you have understood the love of God, then and then only you have fully understood Justification by Faith, and you have fully understood and experienced that peace with God. Because the ground of our Justification is God's love. And the ground of our peace with God is to be rooted and grounded in that love.
2. Paul wants to more than simply to give a speech. Paul wants that same love to be shed abroad horizontally to our neighbors, that the world may see that love through the believers, the church.

With this background, let's go now to Romans 5:6. Verses 6, 8, 9, and 10 are dealing with the love of God. Verse 7 is dealing with human love, and you will notice that there is a contradiction between human love and God's love. There is a difference; they are opposites, and we will look at it as we go along.

There are four words that I want you to catch a glimpse of, or to notice, as we deal with the love of God. Two of those words are found in verse 6:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

The Greek word for “powerless” simply means “helpless.” What Paul is saying here is: “When we were still incapable of saving ourselves, in due time (or at the right time, or at the appointed time) Christ died for the ungodly.”

Please notice two things:

1. While we were helpless...
2. While we were ungodly...

...Christ died for us.

Now this is such a radical, such a revolutionary concept, that Paul says, “I want to show you that this is in complete contradiction to human love.”

So in verse 7 he describes the ultimate expression of human love. He says:

Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die.

People don't give up their lives for an unrighteous man. But it is possible, he says, that, perhaps, for a good man, one would even dare to die.

Now there was a story that was very familiar to the population, to the people of Paul's day. It was part of Greek mythology, and it's very likely that Paul had this story in mind as he used verse 7. But we are living 2,000 years later, and you are not familiar with the story, unless you have studied Greek mythology, so let me give you the story. It's the story of two people: one is Alcestis, and the other one is Admetus.

Admetus was a young man, who was a fairly good citizen, a good man. But he was accused

falsely, as the story goes, and was sentenced to death falsely. Now Alcestis was his girlfriend. She knew him, she knew that he was a good man. She knew that he was innocent. She knew that he did not deserve to die. But she also knew, according to the law of the country, that she could not reverse the verdict. So she goes to the Judge and she says, “Look, I can’t convince you, because you have already made the judgment, that Admetus is a good man, he does not deserve to die. I would like to offer myself in his place.”

And the Judge accepted that. The Greeks said, “This is the epitome of genuine love. Here is Alcestis who is willing to die for a good man, Admetus.”

Paul is saying, “That is possible. Human beings have been known to give up their lives for a good cause, or for loved ones, or for a good person. It is not common, but it has happened.” But, he says in verse 8, “God’s love is in complete contradiction to this love. Jesus did not die for somebody good.” Romans 5:8:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Can you see that? God doesn't say, "Well, if you're good, I'll die for you." He didn't do that. While we were sinners, while we were helpless, while we were ungodly: these are the three things that you need to know. In other words, Paul is saying, "God loved us unconditionally." And then in verse 9 he says:

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

I want you to notice that verse 9 is dealing with believers, those of us who have accepted Justification by Faith. He says, "Look, if God loved us, and He died for us while we were sinners, ungodly, helpless, why are Christians ever doubting the love of God, why are they doubting their justification? Don't you realize that if God loved you when you were a sinner, that He loves

you when you have accepted Him and come back to Him? Can you imagine that, doubting the love of God? How much more do you have to be sure that God will save you now that you have accepted Justification by Faith? Why are you doubting?”

It is a tragedy when Christians come to me and say, “I am not sure I’m going to make it to heaven.” Do you know what you’re saying? “I am not sure God loves me.” That’s a tragedy. It is because we have projected human love onto God, and when we do that, we pervert the character of God, because human love is conditional. It has to be aroused, it has to be generated. I don’t love people automatically; you have to be good to me, if I am to love you in return.

That’s why, in our world, we always try to produce love from each other by incentives, by doing good acts. It’s a human problem. But, thank God, He loves us in spite of what we are. He loves us unconditionally. He loves us because He is love, not because we deserve it.

Paul is saying, “Much more, now that you have accepted Justification by Faith through His blood, you can be guaranteed that He will do everything to make sure that you are in heaven with Him...much more.” Why? He goes on in Romans 5:10:

For if, when we were god’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

That’s the fourth word describing us: we were helpless, we were ungodly, we were sinners, but now, even worse, we are enemies. Enemies of God. While we were still enemies, that’s what he means, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.

There is one Person in heaven Who is on your side. He was on your side before you ever turned to Him. While we were enemies, God said to His Son, “Son, I know that human race down there is rebellious, they have turned against us, but I want

you to go down there and save them — not condemn them, but save them.”

The Son said, “That is the greatest desire I have too, Father. I want to save them.”

And the Holy Spirit said the same thing, and together they came down to save us. Paul is saying, “This is the kind of love God has for us.”

But now, having done that, having expounded that passage, let us look at the context. Why is Paul explaining the love of God? Because, he says, “This is the kind of love the Holy Spirit pours into your heart.” That’s in Romans 5:5:

And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

What does that mean to you? How should it affect you? In two ways:

1. When you have a God that loves you like

that, unconditionally, a God whose love is unchangeable.... You see, human love differs from God's love in three ways.

A. Human love is conditional; God's love is unconditional.

B. Human love is changeable.

The fact that you love me today is no guarantee that you will love me tomorrow. That's the tragedy with human love. But the fact that God loves me today, I can guarantee that He loves me tomorrow because His love is unchangeable. Jeremiah tells us that He loves us with an everlasting love [chapter 31:3]. In 1 Corinthians 13:8 where Paul defines and explains this Agape love, he says, "Agape never fails." We have a God whose love is changeless.

C. Human love is self-seeking.

At the heart of all human love is self,

because that's how we are by the fall. We have sinful natures that are egocentric. But God's love is self-giving. And because it is self-giving, He has only one desire, to live for you. Christ had two choices on the cross: He could chose between Himself and the world [i.e., fallen humanity].

The devil said, "Don't be a fool, come down and save yourself."

Christ said, "No! I love the world more than I love myself." That is the kind of love He has. When you understand that, you will have peace with God.

2. It is this kind of love that God wants us to shed abroad to our neighbors.

The world needs to see the love of God. They saw it in the face of Jesus Christ. But Christ is no longer in this world, He's in heaven. But His body, the church, is here, and that is His desire.

What Paul is doing here in Romans 5:6-10 is simply telling us what Jesus taught on the Sermon on the Mount. So I want you to notice what Jesus taught on the Sermon on the Mount and you will see that it is identical to what we have just covered. Turn to Matthew 5, and you will notice here that Christ is doing the same thing: He is contrasting human love with God's love. He is saying, "This is the kind of love, this Divine love is what Christians should reflect in their daily living." This is the kind of love that Judaism was teaching the people. It is the kind of love that can be generated by human beings. Jesus said [Matthew 5:43-44]:

You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." [That is typical human love.] But [the same word that Paul used in Romans 5:8, "in contrast" to what you have been taught] I tell you [this is the truth, this is what you should really do]: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven....

Is this natural? Have you tried it? Well, I'll

tell you, it is impossible. Jesus is not asking you to try, because even if you try you cannot do these things. Man cannot — by will power or by effort — love his enemies. It is a contradiction to his nature. This love comes only to those who have the Holy Spirit living in them, and Whose love is poured into them through the Holy Spirit.

Then, in Matthew 5:45, Jesus explains that, when you do this, you are behaving like the children of God: “...that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven.” Then He describes the love of the Father:

He causes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

The next time God blesses you, don't you ever get the idea that He has blessed you, or He has blessed our church, because we are good. No, He has blessed us because He is love.

Let me illustrate it to you. During the Exodus,

did God bless the Jews? Did He protect them? Did He feed them miraculously? The answer is yes. You know, in 1975 I did the same route as the Jews, except this time I went by car, I did not walk. It took me eight hours to do the Exodus trip. It took them 40 years. The temperature in the daytime would reach as much as 120 degrees. It was hot. The night was cold. In fact, when I was leaving on the trip I just took light clothing with me. The Egyptian Pastor said, “Don’t you dare do that.” They insisted that I take some warm clothing.

I said, “What for? We’re in the desert.”

They said, “Wait and see.”

They were right. It was bitterly cold. In the Exodus, God gave them fire at night to keep them warm. He gave them a cloud, a covering, “air conditioning” in the daytime. He gave them food during the day. Why? Were they good? How did God feel about the Jews during the Exodus? Read Hebrews 3 and 4. He was very unhappy with

them. Yet He blessed them. Why? Because God's love is unconditional.

Next time you have a problem, don't say God is punishing you. God never punishes in the way that we think man punishes. God loves you; He is out to bless you. So Jesus says, "He brings rain on the good and the bad. He brings the sunshine on the evil and the righteous." And then, please notice how Jesus goes on, Matthew 5:46:

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

The "tax collectors" were not the IRS [U.S. Internal Revenue Service]. To the Jewish mind, to the people of Christ's day, tax collectors were the equivalent of sinners. What Christ was saying was this: that if you love only those who are good to you, you are no different from sinners. I don't have to be a Christian to love my friends; even the sinners, the atheists, love their friends. Matthew 5:47:

And if you greet only your brothers [i.e., your fellow Jews], what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

“Therefore,” said Jesus, “do not behave in the natural way.” You don’t have to be a Christian to love your friends, to love your fellow brethren. It does take a Christian to love your enemies. It does take a Christian to pray for those who curse you. In Matthew 5:48 He says:

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

We have misused that word “perfect.” Jesus is not saying, “Be sinless.” What He’s saying here is, “You must love as Christians, you must love in the same way that the Father loves, without discrimination, unconditionally.” That is true Christianity, and that is the kind of love that Paul is talking about. This will take place when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.

Let me put it another way. Look at John 13, Jesus says in verse 34:

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

He's talking to His disciples. By the way, the word "new" does not mean brand new. The Greek word kainane means "a renewed commandment." The commandment was already given in Deuteronomy, and in Leviticus, too. But the Jews had perverted the love of God in the Old Testament. Therefore, Christ is now saying to the disciples, "I am renewing the commandment. It's not new to the Bible, it's new to you, and that is: You must love each other in the same way that I have loved you." Then look at verse 35, the next verse:

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

When Jesus said, "Be perfect," He meant, "You must love as God loves."

There is a heresy that is known as “perfectionism.” The best description of perfectionism that I ever heard was from a scholar. He said, “A perfectionist is a person who takes infinite pains to follow the blueprint, and he gives infinite pains to everybody else while trying to attain to that perfection.” That’s a perfectionist. But a true Christian will love even though the person he loves doesn’t deserve it, even though that person is turned against him.

The greatest need that the world has is to see the love of God manifested in the church. That is why Jesus said, “The world will know Me when they have seen my love revealed in you.”

How can we put this into practice? How can this become practical? What are the steps? That’s how I want to conclude. I want to show you how it works in reality.

First of all, we must be clear that you and I cannot generate agape.

This love is a gift. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 13, which is in the context of spiritual gifts (because chapters 12, 13, and 14 of 1 Corinthians are dealing with spiritual gifts), chapter 13 is dealing with this agape gift. “It is the supreme gift,” says Paul, “of the Holy Spirit.” That’s why, in Galatians 5:22-23, we are told that:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

So, the fruit of the Spirit is — number one — love.

First of all, we must be clear: you and I cannot generate this love. We cannot screw up our willpower and say, “From now onwards I am going to love my enemies.”

You cannot do that. You can have a desire, you can make a resolution, you can make a

promise, but you can't fulfill it. You don't have the capacity to do it. I don't. None of us have. So, number one, we can't do it. Peter had to learn this the hard way.

When we accept the gift of God, and God brings in the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and God brings us this love, the first thing that this love does is give us peace.

It doesn't give us victory first, it gives us peace. We need to know this. Turn to 1 John 4. This chapter deals with the love of God, and I want to deal with several verses here. Look at verse 17 first of all:

In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

In other words, the first thing that this love does is give you peace, gives you assurance, gives you boldness to face the judgment. Not because you are good, not because your performance is up

to par, it's because as He is, as Christ is, so are you in this world. God looks at you as you are in His Son. And since God is pleased with His Son, so He is with you. Now look at verse 18:

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

As long as you are scared about the judgment, as long as you are scared about facing the final conflict, as long as you're not sure about your salvation, the love of God can never be perfected in you.

So as long as you are insecure about your salvation, as long as you are biting your teeth and saying, "I wonder if I will make the judgment," God's love can never be perfected in you. Why? Because fear and God's love cannot live in the same camp. They are opposites. You see, you and I are born victims to fear. Hebrews 2:14,15 says so:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

The ultimate fear that we all have is the fear of death. Every other fear is a ramification of that one fear. But a Christian is not afraid of death, because he has the guarantee of life. Because a Christian who has accepted Christ and who is justified by faith “has crossed over from death to life” [John 5:24].

The love of God also does something else. Look at verse 7 and verse 12 of this same chapter. First, 1 John 4:7:

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

The source of love is God. And everyone who loves, everyone who manifests this agape, is

proving that he is born of God and knows God. So please remember that Christian love is not the means of justification but is the evidence of justification by faith. Now, 1 John 4:12:

No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Remember, God is love. Nobody has seen God. Christ came here to manifest that God is love, but now He's in heaven. He's depending on us to manifest that love.

Okay, you have accepted Jesus Christ as your righteousness. He is your righteousness, you have been justified by faith. God gives you the Holy Spirit, and the first thing the Holy Spirit does, is give you peace. But there is a problem.

The problem is: what is the standard of righteousness that we must now live? We all know that the standard of righteousness is the Ten Commandments. But here's the problem: in order

for you and me to keep the Ten Commandments, we need an ingredient. That ingredient is Agape. Jesus made that clear in Matthew 22:35-40:

One of them [the Pharisees], an expert in the law, tested him [Jesus] with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

A young man came to Jesus; He said, “What is the greatest commandment?” And Jesus divided the commandments into two camps, just as we as a church have done, rightly so.

The first four commandments deal with our relationship to God. The last six deal with our relationship to one another, our neighbors and so on. Jesus said to this young man, “Love your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with

all your being; that's the first commandment. The second is like the first: love your neighbors like you love yourself." Just like you naturally, spontaneously, unconditionally love yourself, that's the way you must love your neighbors now.

Now here's the problem. If I don't have this agape, if I cannot generate it naturally (I can't produce it naturally), then I can't love my God or my neighbors naturally. But if God gives me this agape as a gift, so that I may, in turn, return it back to Him by keeping the first four commandments, you make God selfish. He gives you His love that it may come back to Him. That is why you will find almost nowhere — it's hardly found in the New Testament — where we are told to keep the first four commandments.

Does it mean that God doesn't want us to keep the first four commandments? No. But the way we keep the commandments is by belief. Please look at 1 John 3:23. Two things are required of you:

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

That is how you and I can keep the first four commandments. In other words, the basis of keeping the first four commandments is faith. If I have faith, I will have only one God, no other. If I have faith, I will not rest in my performance, or in the government, or in Social Security; I will rest in the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus Christ. If you are keeping the Sabbath without the faith motive, you are not keeping the Sabbath, according to the commandments. The only way you and I can keep the first four commandments is by faith alone. That's all that God wants from you. That's why Jesus said, in Matthew 6:33, in the Sermon on the Mount:

But seek first his [God's] kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things [to eat, drink, wear] will be given to you as well.

Put your confidence in God, His salvation, and

He will supply all your needs.

So God gives you agape, not that it may go back to Him. All He wants from you is faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God. He gives you this agape, not that it may go back vertically (it comes down vertically) but that it may go back horizontally to our neighbors.

That's why Paul can say that all the Law is fulfilled when you love one another. In other words, God gives you this agape that it may go out horizontally to our neighbors. And when the world sees that, then they will say, "Now we know that the gospel is the power of God, unto salvation."

That is why the world needs to see not how good you and I are; the world needs to see the love of God shed abroad through the Holy Spirit. When the world sees that, the earth will be lighted with His glory. And the human race — even the atheist, even the scientist who is looking for evidence and for demonstration — will say, "It is true, now I have seen it; these people love, as no other human

beings can love, except God be with them.”

For you see, this love was demonstrated once, in the early church. Read the book of Acts, chapter 4, especially verse 32 onwards. Acts 4:32-35:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

This love was demonstrated, and enemies of Christianity — Cicero, Celsus, historians who hated Christianity — had to confess, “We are against them, but we must admit, these people know how to love each other.”

When they talked about the agape feast, they were not talking about nicely decorated tables, with candles, like we have today. That's not an agape feast. They were talking about a master and a slave sitting together and sharing the same meal; that was agape, something that was a complete contradiction to their culture.

This is the revelation that the world needs to see today. That is the why the greatest fruit of Justification by Faith that the world needs to see is not raising our hands and saying, "Praise the Lord, I am saved!" The world doesn't want to know you're saved. That we have here inside. What the world needs to see is, "Do you have the love of God?" Because that's the only way they can know God, through His body the church. It is my prayer that the gospel will transform you and me:

1. That you have peace with God; that you can face anything because you know God is on your side.
2. That the world around you will see this love

of God — this unconditional, this changeless, this self-giving love that was revealed in Jesus Christ.

When that has happened, the work will be finished; the world will be lighted with His glory and the end will come. May God bless us, that you should know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

I have some homework for you. In the next study, we are dealing with a very difficult text, one that is controversial, one that caused a lot of controversy in the history of the Christian church and in our own church. It's Romans 5:12. It's the key text used by those who preach the doctrine of original sin. I'll give you the problem, and I want you to prayerfully wrestle with it.

The problem is in the last phrase of that verse. Paul says that, "All die because all have sinned." And that's an incomplete phrase. What did He mean? Did he mean all die because all sinned like Adam, or did he mean that all die because all

sinned in Adam? That's the big issue. I want you to wrestle with it. I wrestled with it for five years. I have come to a conclusion and I'll give it next study. But I want you to wrestle with it, prayerfully, because it's a crucial passage. It makes a world of difference between truth and error. So I want you to wrestle with it, and may God bless you.

Chapter 11

Adam, a Type of Christ

(Romans 5:11-14)

Beginning with this and the next two studies, we will be turning our attention to, as far as I'm concerned, the most important passage not in only the whole of Romans, but also in the whole of the Bible. It is this passage, that we shall spend three studies on, that really opened my eyes to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It really laid the foundation to an understanding of righteousness by faith and I hope that you will also receive a blessing.

I would like to start by reading you a statement made by a well known Bible scholar. He is the great Swedish theologian, Anders Nygren. He's the man who wrote that wonderful volume, *Agape and Eros*. He's the man that Dr. Froom mentions in his book, *Movement of Destiny*, as one of the few non-Adventist scholars who was preaching and

who was teaching the message of the gospel that was taught by Waggoner and Jones and Ellen G. White. So here's a man who has written an excellent commentary on Romans, and in this commentary on Romans this is what he says about this passage, Romans 5:12-21:

“The best place to begin for an inclusive view of the meaning of Romans is the fifth chapter's comparison of Adam and Christ. This gives the key to the whole epistle. We have already labelled this passage the high point of Romans....”

That's on page 20. This is page 27:

“When we attain to its height, all that precedes and all that follows spread out before us in one inclusive view, we see how part fits directly into part, how Paul's thought moves from step to step under its inherent compulsion. With this passage as our point of orientation, we can with surer understanding pursue the epistle from beginning to end.”

I believe this man is making a correct statement! If you can understand this passage, I can assure you, you have understood the gospel and you have understood righteousness by faith! But having said that, I would like to add two statements.

First, this is a very difficult passage. It will probably give you spiritual indigestion. It is difficult primarily because the thoughts that Paul presents here are in complete contradiction to the western mind. So you will have to remove your American caps and put on Jewish caps as we look at this passage.

I'll give you a text which I hope will help you. In II Timothy 2:7 Paul gives young Timothy some advice and I would like to give the same advice to you. Let me read it for you. Paul had written to Timothy some difficult things and this is what Paul says in II Timothy 2:7:

Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

I would say to you: consider what Paul tells us in Romans 5:12-21 and may the Lord give you understanding. I'll do my best to try and make it simple. But I would request you to remove, to put aside your preconceived ideas. You know, preconceived ideas are the greatest hindrance to Bible study. What we want to discover is not what we THINK Paul is saying, but what Paul IS saying. What is Paul telling us here? That is our concern! The issue is not who is right and who is wrong. The issue is "what is Paul saying?" because it is Paul who was inspired to write this passage. We must simply accept what God is saying through Paul.

Secondly, this passage is not only difficult, it is very controversial. It is controversial because it is the key passage used by those who preach the doctrine of "original sin." Now you may not be aware of it, but our church has not taken a stand on this doctrine, and you know why? Because we are divided. Those who deal with this doctrine fight like cats and dogs. We are divided on the doctrine

of original sin. Now I am not going to discuss original sin because we are discussing this passage, but I will say this much about “original sin.”

Today, there are many definitions of “original sin.” When I take all those definitions and evaluate them on the basis of scripture, I have come to the conclusion that this doctrine is a mixture of truth and error.

But our concern this morning is what Paul is saying in this passage. There are three things that we could do with a difficult passage. (By the way, Romans 5 to Romans 8 has some very difficult passages, and I’m going to use the same method for all of them.)

You see, you can either ignore the passage like some do and say, “Well, it is too difficult, so I won’t preach on it.” And that’s why I have yet to hear a sermon on Romans 5:12-21. I don’t know how many sermons you’ve heard on that passage, but that’s no solution. Because when Paul wrote this passage, he was not intending it to be difficult.

He was intending to pass on a message that is extremely important to us. So it doesn't bless us by simply ignoring it. The other method, of course, is to skim over it so that there will be no controversy. Well, that's no solution either.

I prefer the third method and that is to wrestle with this passage. That's why I'm spending three studies on this passage. I believe we should wrestle with it like Jacob wrestled with that angel and not let go until God has blessed us! I'll be frank with you. I wrestled with this passage for five years. But I'm an old man. You young fellows are living in the atomic age, in the computer age, you know. I'm just learning typing and I have reached that enormous speed of 17 words a minute. I hope by the end of this quarter, I will break the sound barrier. But you young fellows, you take computers and you whiz through it as if it was nothing, so I hope it won't take you five years to wrestle with this passage.

But I would like to share with you what I discovered. It was a tremendous blessing to me

and I want it to be a tremendous blessing to you! And that's why I'm taking so long. If I had my own way, I would have spent more than three studies on this. But I think that three studies will give enough meat for you to chew, or, as one African said to me, "That is not meat! You have given us bones to chew!" Well, I hope you enjoy it. These are Loma Linda bones. They're all kosher.

Now, this time we will deal with four verses in Romans 5: 11, 12, 13, and 14. This passage that we are going to study now will lay the foundation for the next two studies. Before we look at the passage itself, I want to pinpoint one verse of these four verses that is the problem text. It's verse 12 and I mentioned it at the end of the last study, but I want you to look at it. Let's read it and then I will pinpoint the problem. Romans 5:12:

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned....

Now Paul is saying three things in this one verse:

1. He is saying that sin entered the world through one man. Now the word “world” — the Greek word is “kosmos“ — has more than one meaning. I have discovered at least six meanings for that one word. The context tells you what is the meaning of the word and here the word “world” has the same meaning as it has in John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Here the word “world” means the human race, or mankind, or humanity, to which all of us belong. What Paul is saying in the first statement is that sin became our heritage! It became part of us through one man.

2. He is saying that this sin that this one man committed brought death to him. The reason for this is obvious because God said to our first parents

that the day they eat of the forbidden fruit, the day they sin, they will surely — or as the Hebrew word puts it, they will “certainly” — die. So that is no problem. The problem is in the third statement.

3. This death did not only come to Adam, but it spread to the whole human race, which is you and me, all of us. This death spread; it became universal.

Now Paul was an ex-Pharisee. He was an expert on the law. He knew what Deuteronomy 24:16 said:

Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.

He knew what Ezekiel 18 said. [Read the entire chapter, but here is Ezekiel 18:20:]

The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The

righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.

He knew that, legally, you cannot transfer guilt and punishment. You can't transfer. No law allows that. And so, because he knows that, he makes a statement. He says, "This death spread to all men because all sinned."

It is that last phrase which is an incomplete statement that is the cause of the problem. I can imagine in heaven, some of those great scholars who wrestled with this through the ages of the Christian church will go to Paul and they will shake their heads at him and they will say, "Paul, why didn't you finish the sentence! Don't you know what headaches you caused us?!" I know what he will say. "Why didn't you read the context?"

There are only two ways you and I can finish the sentence. Did Paul mean that all die because all sinned IN Adam? Or did he mean all die

because all sinned LIKE Adam? Which one? That is the big issue. I don't know if you wrestled with the problem, but those who have belong to one of these two camps.

Now we can't get the answer to the problem in verse 12. We have to look at the context, we have to approach it from every angle. I want to tell you the position I have taken: I am convinced that what Paul is saying here is that we all die because we all sinned IN Adam and not LIKE Adam. I'm going to give you five reasons.

I want you to wrestle with this, and I don't care who you go to, but I would say this much: if you take the position that we all die because we sin LIKE Adam, I want you to know that I will not turn against you. I will not report you to the conference. I will still be your friend and your brother in Christ. I'll respect you. All I ask is for you to be honest with the text and give me a reason from the Bible — not from your own viewpoint, from the Bible — why you have taken the position. I'm going to give you my reasons.

Four of them are Biblical reasons. One is an historical reason because you have to take history into account, too. Let's go through these five reasons so that after we do that we can go to the passage and understand what Paul is saying.

Argument #1. Historically, it is not true that all die because all sinned LIKE Adam. Take babies, for example. Do babies die? Yes. Yet they don't have personal sin. A baby of three months doesn't have personal sin. It has not sinned like Adam, yet it dies. Therefore, it's contradicting what Paul says. Because Paul says that death spread to all men. No exception.

Argument #2. This is a grammatical reason, in that Paul uses the aorist tense. That's a tense we don't have in the English language, but it's a past historical tense. Therefore, it implies a once-and-for-all act that took place in the past. If Paul had in mind that it is our personal sins that bring death to us, then he would use the present continuous tense. He doesn't. I say this because, in chapter 3 of

Romans, Paul makes a similar statement in verse 23, except there he adds something else. Romans 3:22-23:

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

In Romans 3:22,23 he says the gospel of Righteousness by Faith applies to ALL men, Jews and Gentiles. And the reason is there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles. Why? Because all — that is, Jews and Gentiles — have sinned, the very same statement that he uses in verse 12 of chapter 5, in the same aorist tense. All have sinned. But he adds, “and besides all having sinned,” and he says, “fall short of the glory of God.” And there in the second statement he is using the present continuous tense.

What did Paul mean, to fall short of the glory of God? It is another way of simply saying “sin.” Because “sin” simply means “coming short of the

mark.” And the mark is always the glory of God, which we know is the love of God. When we come short of Agape, we are sinning. So when Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:3:

If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love [agape], I gain nothing.

That’s means you are sinning. So what Paul is saying in Romans 3:23 is: “All sinned in the past, plus all are presently, personally sinning themselves.”

So if the second statement refers to our personal sins, the first statement has to be what took place in Adam. What Paul is saying is that we sinned in Adam, but that’s not all. We also have personal sins. We are sinning presently. So the aorist tense implies an act that took place in the past.

Argument #3. Let’s go back to chapter 5. In verses 13 and 14 of Romans 5, which is an

explanation of verse 12, which we will come to in a moment, Paul makes it clear that the people who live from Adam to Moses were dying even though their sins were not identical or like Adam's transgression. In other words, they were dying even though their personal sins were unlike Adams' sin, which is a contradiction of the idea that we all die because we all sinned like Adam. Paul is saying the very opposite. They were dying even though they did not sin LIKE Adam's transgression.

Argument #4. In part of the context, verses 15 to 18, not once, not twice, but, you will discover, four times, Paul makes it very clear that we are judged, we are condemned, and we MUST die BECAUSE OF ADAM'S SIN and NOT our personal sins! Therefore, the context tells me that Paul says Adam's death spread to all men because ALL SINNED IN ADAM! Or, to be more accurate with the Greek, "in as much as all sinned," and we finish the sentence by the context, "in Adam."

Argument #5. But now I want to give you the fifth reason, which to me is the most important argument. If you forget the first four, I don't mind. But this fifth argument is so crucial that it is important that you clearly understand what Paul is doing here. In Romans 5, verses 12 to 21, Paul is comparing Adam with Christ. The reason why he is discussing Adam and our situation in Adam in verses 12 to 14 is because he wants to use Adam as a type or as a pattern of Christ. In other words, he is saying: "What happens to us because of Adam in the same way happens to us because of Christ."

There is a parallel. I want you to notice something here. After discussing our situation in Adam, how does he end up in verse 14? Because that's why he's discussing Adam. He says:

...Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

He's a pattern or type. He's a figure of the One to come. If you keep this in mind, then listen to this very carefully: what is true of us in Adam must also be true of us in Christ! That's the

pattern! That's the parallel.

Therefore, if you insist that we all die because we sinned LIKE Adam, to be honest with this passage, you have to teach that we are saved, we are justified because we have obeyed LIKE Christ. And I'll ask you one question: how many of you have obeyed like Christ? None. Therefore, none of us are saved. And this text is no longer good news; it's bad news.

If you insist that we are lost because we sinned LIKE Adam, then you must insist, to be fair with Paul's writings, that we are saved because we obeyed LIKE Christ. Not only is this a contradiction of Paul's thought here and in the rest of Romans, but we would be guilty of teaching legalism, which is a far cry from the message of salvation in Christ.

This is not the end of the problem, so I'm going to give you two more facts, two more things that I hope will help you. When I preach this to Adventist congregations, I know there is a question

that rises up. What about Ellen G. White? I have no problem. I believe Ellen G. White and Paul were in perfect harmony. So I'm going to read you three quotations from Ellen G. White, and you will see that she takes the position that in Adam we are lost! It is his sin that brings condemnation. The first one is from Bible Commentary, vol.6, page 1,074:

“As related to the first Adam, men [it includes women, because that's a generic term] receive from him [that is, from Adam] nothing but guilt and the sentence of death.”

Statement #2 is from Faith and Works, page 88:

“We have reason for ceaseless gratitude to God that Christ, by His perfect obedience [not by you obeying like Him, but by His perfect obedience] has won back the heaven that Adam lost through disobedience. Adam sinned and the children of Adam [which is all of us] share his guilt and it's consequences. But Jesus bore the guilt of Adam, and all the children of Adam that will flee to

Christ, the second Adam, may escape the penalty of transgression.”

One more quote, from Sons and Daughters, page 120 [notice the last one in particular]:

“Blessed is the soul who can say I am guilty before God, but Jesus is my advocate. I have transgressed His law, I cannot save myself, but I make the precious blood that was shed on Calvary all my plea. I am lost in Adam, but restored in Christ.”

So I have the Spirit of Prophecy to back me up.

But our final argument must be from scripture. We have a message for the world. But now let me bring you to another problem. Some will say (and I’m not making this up), “Yes, it is true. We all die because of Adam’s sin.” Now this is a typical Adventist argument. “But,” they say, “we die because of Adam’s sin, but this is only the first death. The second death is because of our personal sins.”

That may sound like good Adventist theology, but it does not stand up to the scrutiny of scripture, because the word “death” appears twice in verse 12 and I want you to look at it. Twice, not once. If you analyze the text, if you use exegesis [“an explanation or critical interpretation of a text”], look at the grammar, and the verbs and everything from the original, you will discover that the death that came to Adam, the same death spread to all men.

Therefore, if you say that the death we receive from Adam was only the first death, then we must also teach that all that Adam received when he sinned, when he ate the forbidden fruit, was the first death. And the question I will ask you, “When did the second death come in?” What did God mean when He said to Adam and Eve, “The day that you eat of this forbidden fruit you shall surely die!” Did He mean the first death, or did He mean the second death?

Well, you all know He meant good-bye to life

forever. In fact, that is the official position of our church, and a correct position, too. I would say that the first death was a requirement, a necessity because of the gospel. I compare the first death to a doctor's waiting room. I have yet to go to a doctor's appointment where the appointment is on time. I don't blame the doctor, because he's human. He cannot predict, he does not have foreknowledge that this will take him exactly 20 minutes for his previous patient. So if the previous patient is 25 minutes, I am to sit down in his waiting room for five minutes. Often it is more than that.

But the thing is this: if this world, because of the gospel, would continue for six thousand years, then what happens to the people who die? They have to wait for the judgment. Judgment is at the end of time. So the first death is a waiting room until the judgment.

But if there was no gospel, Adam legally should have died the very day he sinned because the Hebrew text says that in the same day that you

sin, you shall certainly die. That very same day. So the moment Adam sinned, he actually belonged to death row. And if he had died that same day, where would you be? In the grave with him, being eaten by worms! That's all. So the death that comes to us through Adam's sin is not just the first death. It includes the second death. We are born to a lost race because of Adam.

The whole force of the parallel in Romans 5:12-21 between Adam and Christ depends on the idea of the solidarity of mankind in Adam and in Christ. In the great majority of the 510 times the word "Adam" is used in the Old Testament (i.e., in the Hebrew language), with only rare exception, it possesses a collective significance. When you read the word "Adam" in the Old Testament, it is not referring to an individual. It is referring to all men in one man. It's a solidarity statement. The word "Adam" means "mankind," not just singular "man."

In the same sense, Christ is referred to as the last or "second Adam" in the New Testament.

(Actually, the New Testament only calls Him the last Adam, but Sister White calls Him the second Adam and there's nothing wrong with that as long as we don't have a third Adam; there're only two. The second is also the last.) So when the New Testament calls Christ the second or the last Adam, it is not referring to one man among many men. It's referring to a corporate man, Jesus Christ. Because the reason why God condemned us to death, because of Adam's sin, is not because He's transferring guilt. It's because we participated in Adam's sin. We were implicated, or, to use the language of Hebrews, we were "in the loins of Adam" when he sinned.

The life that Adam passed on to his children is a life that has already sinned. It's a life that stands condemned and, therefore, it's a life that must die! Therefore, the only way the righteousness of Christ can be ours is not through transfers. It's because we were implicated in Christ's obedience. And the only way that can happen is because the humanity of Christ had to be the corporate humanity of the fallen race that needed redeeming. Otherwise, we

are preaching an unethical gospel. That is what the Christian church is being accused of today. Legal fiction. I want now quickly to go to the passage.

Let's look now with this in mind, let's look at the passage itself, Romans 5, verses 11-14. Paul has been discussing with us in verses 6-10, about the wonderful, unconditional love of God. And we covered that last study. Now in verse 11 he says:

Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

“Not only are we happy because of God's love being unconditional, but we Christians also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ because we have already [once again, the aorist tense, the past tense, “we have already”] received the atonement (or reconciliation).”

Do you realize that there is no barrier between you and a Holy God? Do you know that, in Christ, God looks at you as if you are perfect? As if you

have never sinned? Do you realize that you can come **BOLDLY** to God, through Christ, without any doubt, with a clean conscience? Not because your performance is good, but because, in Christ, you stand perfect.

Paul tells us that that's the statement in verse 11. But now he wants to expound on it and he turns immediately to Adam. Why to Adam? What has Adam to do with our atonement? No, Adam has nothing to do with our atonement, but he wants to use Adam as a pattern, as a model.

So he says those three things in verse 12. Having made the statement in verse 12 that all men die, that the death of Adam spread to all men because all sinned "in Adam," he goes on to prove it in verses 13 and 14.

Now his proof is also a difficult passage (mainly to Adventists, because of our preconceived ideas about the law). We, as a church, believe that the law was always existing. That is correct! I'm not denying it. Neither is Paul. So please keep that

in mind as we look at verse 13. Paul is not discussing here about the existence of the law. What is he saying in Romans 5:13?

...For before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.

He is giving us an implication here that there was a time when there was no law. (Some translations read “until the law,” which means before God gave the law.) He’s using the word “law” and he’s referring to the Ten Commandments, as a legal code. The law was existing from before. But when did God post up His Ten Commandments in black and white for men to see? It was at Mount Sinai.

Were people sinning before God actually gave the law in writing? And the answer is yes. For Paul is saying in verse 13:

“Sin was in the world.” That is, in the human race. The human race who lived from Adam to

Moses were sinning.

“But,” he says, “sin is not imputed (or counted or reckoned) when there is no law.”

In other words, legally, God could not say to those people, “You have broken My Ten Commandments, therefore, you must die.” He could not do that because he had not yet posted the Commandments.

If tomorrow the U.S. government decides to reverse the law of our freeways and return back to 55 miles per hour, no policeman can touch me until they have repainted the new speed limit on the posters. As long as it says 65 miles per hour, even though the U.S. federal government passes a law, they can't touch me until they change the law on those posters.

So God legally could not touch them for their sins. Since God is a just God, He could not do it. And yet he says in verse 14:

Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses....

These people were dying. If they were not dying for their personal sins, then the only reason they were dying is because they transgressed in Adam. That's his argument.

I want you to notice the play of words, which is also important. Listen to all of Romans 5:14:

Nevertheless, death reigned [that means they were all dying] from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command [they were sinning, but they had not sinned], as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

Yes, they were sinning, but their sinning was different. It was not the same as Adam's transgression. I want you to notice the play of words. There are twelve words in the Bible, Old and New Testament, for sin. [For details, see

Biblical Definition of Sin.] Each word has a specific meaning. The word “sin” is “missing the mark.” The word “transgression” is not missing the mark; the word “transgression” means a willful, deliberate violation of a law. In other words, you can never transgress without the knowledge of the law. The prerequisite for transgression is the knowledge of the law.

The people from Adam to Moses were sinning. But they were not transgressing. Why? God had not spelled out the law in clear terms. They had an understanding in their conscience. We saw that in chapter 2. But there was no clear statement from God, “Thou shall not kill. Thou shall not steal.” That came at Mount Sinai.

Adam’s sin was a transgression because he willfully disobeyed. When Eve brought that fruit to him, he knew that it was the forbidden fruit. He knew that God had commanded them not to touch it. So when Adam sinned, he was willfully violating a law. He transgressed. And God said to Adam that, ‘The day you transgress, you will die.’

These people were sinning, but they did not transgress. Yet they were dying. Was God being unfair to them? Was He being unjust? No! They were not dying because of their personal sins. They were dying because they participated, they were implicated, or, to use the language of Hebrews 7, they were “in the loins of Adam” when Adam transgressed.

I know what some of you will say who come to me: ”What about the flood? Wasn’t that before the Ten Commandments were given?” I want you to read I Peter 3:19-21, where Peter tells us why the people in the flood died.

...Through whom [the Spirit] also he [Jesus] went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience

toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

They died because they were disobedient to the gospel, not the law. God said to Noah, “Build an ark and invite the people in!” And how many souls entered in? Only eight! The rest were disobedient.

And read your New Testament; it’s clear about the end. People will not be lost because they are bad or because they broke His law. People are lost only for one reason. They have deliberately, willfully rejected the gift of God, Jesus Christ. Look at John 3:18:

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.

Look at Mark 16:15-16:

He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever

believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned....”

Man is lost because he deliberately, willfully rejects the gift. In other words, what did God do to save us? He took you, He took me, He took corporate man — the human race — and He put us into Christ.

In Christ He rewrote our history and, in that history, we have salvation, full and complete. In that history, the human race stands legally justified. That is the unconditional good news of the gospel.

But now you will say, “Why isn’t everybody saved?”

Read Romans 5:15-18, which is our next study. Read very carefully. Notice two things that Paul says about us “in Christ” that he does not say about us “in Adam”:

1. He refers to our position in Christ as a gift. Now you all know that a gift can never be

enjoyed until you receive it. The gift is for all people, all mankind. John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

He did not give the Son to the elect. He gave His Son to all mankind. Who will enjoy the blessing? “Whoever believes.”

No mention of gift in terms of Adam, because our position in Adam is a natural position. We are in Adam by native rights. That’s the way we belong by nature. Our position in Christ is a GIFT and, like any gift, you have to receive it to enjoy it. We’ll cover that, too, in the next study.

2. The second, which is also important, is that Paul uses a phrase for Christ that he never uses for Adam. The phrase is “much more.” By that, which we will see in the next study, he means that in Christ we receive much

more than what we lost in Adam. God simply doesn't reverse the situation of the human race in Adam. He gives us MUCH MORE than what we lost in Adam, even at his best.

Therefore, I will never complain to Adam, "Why did you sin?" Because, if he did not sin, I would not have that "much more."

I'll even say, "Thank you, Adam, for sinning, because now I have much more than what I lost."

If I lost ten dollars and I can't get it back, then I'll be very disappointed. But if one of you comes and says, "I hear that you lost ten dollars; here's a hundred dollars in exchange."

I'll say, "Thank God, I lost ten!"

Just before we came here we had a terrible hail storm in Idaho. My wife had an old car. It wasn't worth \$500. But we had a terrible hail storm and, because of conference policy, we had to insure it

comprehensive. There was no choice. That hail damaged the car pretty badly. We did not report it to the insurance company because it was an old junkheap. But some friend of ours said, “Look, if you have insurance, claim it!” So she took it to the insurance company. They examined it and gave her \$800. We thanked the Lord for that hail storm because we were better off. We could even now sell it for \$300. In fact, I sold it for \$50, then we left to come here.

We are much better off in Christ than we ever were in Adam. God has given us super abundant grace. I thank God that Jesus was willing to link Himself with us, to redeem me not only from Adam and from my personal sins, but to give us MUCH MORE than we ever lost in Adam. So I have some wonderful good news for you next study. The foundation is that:

As all men die in Adam, likewise all men shall be made alive in Christ.

Do you know where that is found? I won't tell

you. You look for it. It's in Corinthians, but I won't use the reference.

May God bless us as we wrestle with this passage. We shall know the truth and the truth will set us free.

Chapter 12

The Two Adams

(Romans 5:15-18)

The Doctrine of “The Two Adams” is the most neglected doctrine in all of Christendom, including our own church. Yet I am convinced, without a shadow of a doubt, that this doctrine is the most important doctrine pertaining to the gospel. I want you to study it carefully, because I am sure of one thing: if this doctrine could be clearly understood by God’s people and applied (as Paul will do in chapters 6, 7, and 8), I believe that this doctrine will do three things for our church:

1. It will cure Adventism and cure Christianity of legalism in all its forms, an age-long problem.
2. I believe that this message, clearly understood and applied, will cure us of all the antinomianism, the libertinism, and the

“cheap grace” that has been infiltrating the church in the last decade or so.

Because, you see, cheap grace, antinomianism simply means that, since Christ did it all, we can live as we like. If you really understand this gospel, you will never find that the gospel gives you that liberty. The gospel does not give us that liberty.

3. I believe that if we have understood this doctrine and apply it, there will be a revival and reformation in this church that will end up in lighting the earth with His glory. That is why I want to put so much emphasis on this passage.

As I mentioned, it is a difficult passage. I'll try and make it very simple, but I'll tell you one thing: if you are to understand this message, you'll have to come to this passage with an open mind. You must be willing to put aside your preconceived ideas. You must be willing to put aside your

prejudices; otherwise, you will not be able to see what Paul is trying to say. And our greatest concern, as I mentioned last study, is to ask ourselves, “What exactly is Paul saying here?”

He is the inspired writer, not we. We are not to put into the text what we think Paul is saying. But we are to ask ourselves, “What exactly is Paul saying?”

A hundred years ago, God brought a very special message to this [Adventist] church. That message was Christ, our Righteousness, and this passage was the heart of that message. But I’ll tell you something, many of our brethren would not accept the message because of preconceived ideas, because of prejudices. They felt that Waggoner and Jones were departing from the pillars of the church. I would like to read as an introduction, a statement that Ellen G. White made to those brethren. It is now found in Counsels to Editors, page 35.

But I want to read it because I feel that we must take counsel from this statement. the subtitle is

called, “Investigation of Doctrine,” and that’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to investigate the doctrine of The Two Adams. Sister White wrote:

“There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position there is no more truth to be revealed and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth and truth can afford to be fair.”

I want you honestly to look at that passage. Don’t believe a word this African bush preacher is telling you! I want you to wrestle with it yourself, because truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation, and that is what we are going to do with this passage — close investigation.

Now, in the last study we dealt with verses 12 to 14, which actually laid the foundation to a meaningful study of “The Two Adams.” I want to bring to your attention a quick review of what we

covered. I want to remind you of that we covered in detail last time.

Point #1, Paul discusses mankind's situation in Adam in verses 12-14, in order to show that Adam is a type, a figure, a pattern of Christ. You will find this in the last part of verse 14, where Paul says, in different ways, "Adam is a type of Him who was to come" (i.e., Christ). So Adam is a type of Christ.

Now we need to ask ourselves, in what sense is Adam a type, or similar to Christ? You will discover, as you look at verses 15-18, that Adam is a type of Christ only in one sense. In other ways, he's opposite. We will see that, too. But, in one sense, Adam and Christ are similar, they are parallels, and that is this: that what Adam did affected all mankind. Likewise, what Christ did affected all mankind.

That is true of only Adam and Christ. That is why, in the New Testament, Christ is called "the last Adam," because the Hebrew word "Adam" does mean mankind. It's a solidarity statement.

This is the sense in which Adam and Christ are equal, are parallels. We will discover that they are also opposites. They are opposites in what they did, therefore, they are opposites in how they have affected humanity. Adam sinned; Christ obeyed. Adam brought condemnation and death; Christ brought justification unto life, because what they did was different.

But point #2, and this is also crucial. It is crucial because the Christian church, since the Reformation, has been accused by nonChristians, and even by Roman Catholic theologians, of “legal fiction.” That’s the term they use. So number 2 is important to solve that problem.

The reason Adam’s sin brought the death sentence on all mankind is not because God transfers Adam’s punishment to us. If He did that, God would become unlawful because He Himself said in Deuteronomy 24:16, that you cannot transfer guilt and punishment:

Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.

We have many such texts in the Bible. 2 Kings 14:6 brings this out:

Yet he did not put the sons of the assassins to death, in accordance with what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses where the Lord commanded: “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sins.”

Ezekiel chapter 18 right from the beginning, right up to verse 20, especially verses 5 to 20, deals with this one issue. Ezekiel 18:1-20:

The word of the Lord came to me: “What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: ‘The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living

soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son — both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die. Suppose there is a righteous man who does what is just and right. He does not eat at the amountain shrines or look to the idols of the house of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor's wife or lie with a woman during her period. He does not oppress anyone, but returns what he took in pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. He does not lend at usury or take excessive interest. He withholds his hand from doing wrong and judges fairly between man and man. He follows my decrees and faithfully keeps my laws. That man is righteous; he will surely live, declares the Sovereign Lord.

Suppose he has a violent son, who sheds blood or does any of these other things (though the father has done none of them): He eats at the mountain shrines. He defiles his neighbor's wife. He oppresses the poor and needy. He commits robbery. He does not return what he took in pledge. He looks to the idols. He does detestable things. He

lends at usury and takes excessive interest. Will such a man live? He will not! Because he has done all these detestable things, he will surely be put to death and his blood will be on his own head.

But suppose this son has a son who sees all the sins his father commits, and though he sees them, he does not do such things: He does not eat at the mountain shrines or look to the idols of the house of Israel. He does not defile his neighbor's wife. He does not oppress anyone or require a pledge for a loan. He does not commit robbery but gives his food to the hungry and provides clothing for the naked. He withholds his hand from sin and takes no usury or excessive interest. He keeps my laws and follows my decrees. He will not die for his father's sin; he will surely live. But his father will die for his own sin, because he practiced extortion, robbed his brother and did what was wrong among his people.

Yet you ask, 'Why does the son not share the guilt of his father?' Since the son had done what is just and right and has been careful to keep all my

decrees, he will surely live. The soul who sins is the one who will die. The son will not share the guilt of the father, nor will the father share the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous man will be credited to him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be charged against him.”

You cannot legally transfer guilt and punishment. Let me put it this way. If the mother of Ted Bundy, the [serial murderer] who was executed in Florida, if his mother goes to the judge and says, “Look, I love my son. I don’t want to see him dead. He’s young. I would like to die in his place. I volunteer to die in the electric chair in the place of my son.”

Could the judge say, “Okay”? Could he be legally right in doing it? The answer is no. Because, legally, whether it is the law of the land or the law of God, you cannot transfer guilt.

Then how come we all die? It’s because, as we saw in the last study, all sinned in Adam. We participated in his sin. We were implicated in his

sin. Let me put it this way. We all believe that God created us. There's no problem there. The question is, "When did God create you? When did He create me?" There are only two choices: either when my mother conceived me or when God created Adam.

If I say that I was created by God when my mother conceived me, then I must point my finger to God for creating me sinful, with a depraved nature, and that would be blasphemy. The Bible doesn't teach that. For example, in Genesis 2:7:

The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

In Genesis 2:7, where God "breathed into Adam the breath of life," the word "life" there in the Hebrew text is in the plural form, not in the singular. He breathed into Adam "the breath of lives." And Acts 17:26 says that out of one, God created all men to dwell on this earth:

From one man he made every nation of men,

that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

In other words, we are the multiplication of Adam's life. And the life that Adam passed on to us, was a life:

1. It was a life that has sinned.
2. It is a life that is condemned.
3. It is a life that legally has no right to live.

That is, in Adam we all belong to death row because we participated in his sin.

Likewise, by uniting Christ's divinity with the corporate humanity of the human race that needed redeeming, Christ qualified to be the second, the last Adam.

In other words, His obedience can legally be credited to us — to you, to me, to every human being. It can be done legally because all mankind obeyed in Christ. We participated in His obedience. We were implicated in His obedience of the law

and His obedience unto death.

This is where we need to distinguish ourselves as a people from the common understanding of evangelical Christianity, because, you see, the evangelical gospel teaches that, on the cross, one man died in the place of all men. That is unethical. That is why the Christian church has come under the fire of “legal fiction”; the Counter Reformation accused the reformers of legal fiction. Today, the Muslims are accusing Christianity of legal fiction.

The gospel is not legal fiction. We actually died in Christ. II Corinthians 5:14 does not say one man died for all. It goes on to say that because of what Christ did, all men died in Christ:

For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

So, on the cross, it wasn’t one man dying for all men. But, it was all men dying in one man.

That is the gospel of Jesus Christ. And that is the reason why so many people are ignoring this passage, because they can't fathom how all men could die in one man, as long as they separate the humanity of Christ from the humanity that needs redeeming.

I thank God that modern scholars are opening their eyes. I thank God that the International Critical Commentary takes the position now that Christ's humanity had to be the corporate humanity of the human race.

I thank God that Nygren, even Karl Barth, Cranfield, all these fellows are moving to the position that Christ's humanity has to be the humanity that needs redeeming; otherwise, we are preaching an unethical gospel. As I Corinthians 1:30 says, God put you, He put me into Christ and God made Christ to be our wisdom, our righteousness, our redemption, our everything:

It is because of [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God —

that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

That is why this passage we are covering today, The Two Adams, is the foundation of Christ Our Righteousness, of the in Christ motif, which many scholars today are admitting is the central theme of Paul's theology. It is the heart of the message of Righteousness by Faith.

Having emphasized this, let's go to Romans, chapter 5, verses 15 to 18. Before we look at the passage, there are two things I want you to observe. You may not be aware of it, so I want to bring it to your attention. There are two things that Paul says about Christ, and about our situation in Christ, that he does not apply to Adam. Apart from the fact that these men did opposite things, there are two things that Paul applies to Christ that is not true of us in Adam:

1. When he refers to the obedience of Christ which justifies us, he calls it a "gift"; he uses that phrase. You'll find that in verses 15, 16, and 17.

The word “gift” [which means it’s free] he applies towards Christ, but never towards Adam.

Now this is very important. I’ll tell you why. Because a gift can never be enjoyed until you receive it. You will discover that in verse 17 as we come to it.

What is true of us in Adam is not a gift. It belongs to us by native right. We are by creation, we are by nature, we are by native right belonging to Adam. That’s where we belong. Our lawful right is Adam. Therefore, it is not a gift, it is a native right, just like most of you are, by birth, Americans. You were born in this country. This is your right. I wasn’t. I’m a naturalized American citizen. I had to relinquish, publicly, with my hand raised, swearing before the U.S. flag, that I would give up all my allegiance to foreign potentates. I had to take a test — you didn’t have to take a test — I had to take a test on American history. I’m still struggling to understand the American system.

But we are not naturally in Christ. That’s a gift.

You can reject that gift and I will show you what happens when you do.

2. The second thing I want you to notice in this passage about Christ which is not true of Adam, is the phrase “much more,” a phrase that Paul loves to apply to our situation in Christ. What does that mean? It means that what we receive in Christ is **MUCH MORE** than what we lost in Adam! And I’ll tell you that, when you begin to discover what we receive in Christ, it is wonderful.

Anyway, keep these two in mind as we go to our passage. Now, look at Romans 5:15:

But the gift is not like the trespass....

In other words, Christ did not do the same thing as Adam did. The word “trespass” or “offense” refers to Adam’s sin. Please notice it is in the singular. It refers to that sin that Adam committed in the Garden of Eden, the sin that brought death to all people. So he says:

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

Paul is saying when one man sinned, many died. What God gave to us is not only a gift, but He also defines it as grace. Do you know what the word "grace" means? If you give a gift to your children at Christmas or on their birthday, is that grace? The answer is no. It's a free gift. They haven't earned it, but it is not grace.

If I were to go to Steve's house while I know he away and I beat up his wife, Kathy, and smash his furniture and burn his house down, and Steve comes back and he sees his house in ashes and he sees Kathy lying there all bruised and he sees everything gone and smashed and he says, "What happened?"

And she says, "That pastor, your friend called Jack, did it."

Steve gets into his car and he rushes to my house and I see him coming and I say, “Boy, I wonder if he has a shotgun behind his back.” And he has something behind his back. I don’t know what it is. And with trembling — I keep my German Shepherd next to me in case I need his help — I open the door and you know what he does? He gives me a check for a thousand dollars! That is grace!

Grace is doing something very special to your enemy and Romans 5, verses 6 to 10 says that while we were enemies, sinners, ungodly, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. That is grace!

Paul is saying that much more than Adam’s sin, the grace of our Lord, the gift by grace, that of one man, Jesus Christ, abounds or overflows to many. Just like what Adam did brought death to many, what Christ did, as a gift, overflows to many.

Now we go on to verse 16:

Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

When Adam sinned, condemnation to death came to all people, all mankind. But the gift, which came from many offenses, resulted in justification.

Now I want to pause here and look at the words, "much more." I want you to look at the phrase in verse 16 that is very important: "many trespasses." You see, you and I have two problems. Paul has already exposed us to those two problems in Romans chapter 3, verse 23:

...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....

What did he say there? He said that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile in verse 22 and the reason there is no difference is because all have sinned (that is, in the past tense). As I showed you

in the last study, all of us participated in Adam's sin. We sinned in Adam, but we also, besides that, have our own personal sins. We are coming short of the glory of God. And that phrase "coming short" is another way of saying "sinning," because the word "sin" means coming short of the mark.

So what Paul is saying in Romans 3:23 is: all have sinned and all are sinning. We have sinned in Adam, plus we have our own personal sins. If Christ died, if He cancelled only Adam's sin, we still would have a problem. We would have our personal sins. We would need another Savior for our personal sins.

But Christ did much more than cancel Adam's sin. His death was not only the death that Adam brought to us, His death was also the death that we deserved because of our own personal sins. In other words, the cross cancelled Adam's sins, plus our sins — past, present, and future. That is super abundance.

But that's not all, because, even if God were to

cancel my sins plus Adam's sin which condemns me, it still would not save me. I'll tell you why. Because only the righteous, says the Bible, can go to heaven. Cancelling my sins and Adam's sin which condemns me, doesn't make me righteous. It simply makes me neutral.

But Christ did much more than simply cancel sins by His life and by His death or by His obedience. He, besides doing that, brought in justification. As we shall see in verse 18, He has brought justification to life. In other words, He has not only taken care of the sin problem, but He has made us, in Christ, positively righteous, so that, in Christ, you and I stand perfect before God and His holy law, or as Paul says in Romans 10:4:

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

And that is much more than losing what we lost in Adam. That's why Paul loved that phrase "much more."

That's not the end of the matter. Romans 5:17:

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man,....

What is he saying here? He's saying that Adam's sin, it simply did not bring condemnation unto death. It brought death as a conqueror! The word "reign" means to rule over. The king reigns over a nation. When Adam sinned, death came as a conqueror, which means that none of us, apart from the gospel, none of us can escape death.

I remember when we were in Uganda. Oh, I tell you, it was hard in those Idi Amin days. But one of the idiotic things he did, he took four English men (Remember, Uganda was under the British in the olden days; it was a protectorate, under the English government.) and he made them carry him on one of those thrones. He sat right there on top with these four English men and a big placard; he called it "the white man's burden." He had T-shirts made for all the people there; on the T-shirt was his picture and below it read: "Idi Amin, the conqueror

of the British Empire.” Of course, it was a big joke, you know, but that was Idi Amin.

Well, a few months later, he began hearing shelling and some terrible explosives coming from the Tanzanian soldiers which were coming too close to his palace. And even though he was — I’m quoting now what many people thought he was — even though he was an idiot (because his name was Idi, you know), he was smart enough to know that he could not conquer death. He fled, first to Libya, then to Saudi Arabia, where he’s in exile.

You see, nobody can conquer death. Even you young fellows, one of these days, death is going to catch you. I don’t care how strong your muscles are. None of us can escape death. But there is one man who conquered death! Jesus Christ.

And He conquered it as the corporate man. Death came as a conqueror when Adam sinned. No human being has been able to escape death. Yes, thanks to medical science, we have some solutions to sickness. But medical science can’t cure us of

sin or death. It's the Grim Reaper. But look at the second half of verse 17:

...How much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

What does he mean, "much more we'll reign in life"? Adam brought death. If Christ only replaced that with life, that would be doing the opposite. But Christ did much more. Paul says that, in Christ, we will "reign in life." What does that mean?

When you discover that, you will never complain for the sin problem. Because Paul is saying here that, in Christ, we are "much more" better off than we ever were in Adam. And I'm going to give you a taste of this.

In chapter 8 of Romans, Paul tells us in verse 17 that we are joint-heirs with Christ:

Now if we are children, then we are heirs —

heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Do you know what a joint banking account is? A joint account means that both people have the right to that account, legally. That's what it means. Therefore, "joint-heirs with Christ" means Christ shares with us, not only His life, but His throne. And that is much more than what we lost in Adam. I'll give you a couple of texts. Revelation 20:6:

Blessed [which means happy] and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

We know from Thessalonians and other passages, that the Christians, the believers have the first resurrection. "The second death has no power over them" for the simple reason that we have already died the second death in Christ and we have accepted that.

We “will reign with him.” We will not simply have eternal life, but we will reign with Christ. For how long? A thousand years. And after that, what? Christ will move His throne from heaven to this earth.

And I read in Revelation 22:5 that. when that happens, we will reign with Him forever:

There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

That, folks, is super abundance.

Let me put it another way. We in Adam, at our very best, were third-class citizens in this universe. For I read in the Bible that God is number one, He created the angels below Him, and we were created a little below the angels, number three. When Christ redeemed us, He does not take us back to our lost state. That would be wonderful if He did.

But he did much more than that. He took us above the angels. Ephesians 2:6:

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus....

We shall share His throne.

We are much better off in Christ than we ever were in Adam. Don't you ever complain because God allowed sin to come into this world. He allowed sin that He may make us better in Christ. I thank God for that.

We are much better off in Christ than we ever were in Adam. Therefore, anyone who rejects the gift of Christ is a fool. He needs his head examined.

Let's go on to the conclusion. Romans 5:18:

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that

brings life for all men.

Not simply justification, but justification of life. It means that we are qualified for life in Jesus Christ.

One man legally condemned all people. One man legally redeemed all people. That is what Paul is saying here. In Adam, the whole world stood legally condemned. In Adam, the whole world belonged to death row. But thank God for His gift. John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

In Christ, the whole world stands legally justified unto life. The only difference is that this justification of life is a gift and it has to be received. I want to go to the second half of Romans 5, verse 17:

...How much more will those who receive

God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Please remember, you have to receive it. Otherwise, it is not effective.

Here are three points in summary.

1. Adam's sin — in other words, Adam's offense or trespass — brought all mankind under the death sentence. As I have made it clear here, it's the first and second death. Both the deaths come to us through Adam's sin. The first death being a necessity because of the gospel program, the second death being the actual wages of sin.

Let me put it this way. If there was no gospel, there would be no first death. Am I correct? Because God said to Adam [Genesis 2:17]:

...But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.

God said to Adam and Eve, “The moment, the day you sin, you’re dead.”

The reason Adam and Eve did not die the same day was because there was a lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world. Legally, Adam had no right to live one more minute after he sinned. Which means, if he had died, you and I would have died in him. That’s where we belong, legally, in Adam. But there was a first death because of the gospel program. Adam knew nothing about the first death or the second death. He knew of only one death: “Good-bye to life forever.” That’s the only death he knew when God commanded him not to eat of the forbidden fruit. That’s why we, as a church, believe that Adam had “conditional” immortality. What was the condition? “If you obey, you will live; if you disobey, you will die ... forever.”

2. Christ’s obedience did two things for all mankind. What are they?

First of all, it saved all humanity from the second death. And I would like to add the word “only.” It saved us only from the second death. Christ’s death on the cross did not save us from the first death, because the first death is not the wages of sin. It is the second death that is the wages of sin. So when Paul says, “He bore the curse of the law for us,” that means He bore the second death.

When Hebrews 2:9 says that Christ “tasted death for everyone,” the author is referring to the second death. Because in 2 Timothy 1:10, it reads like this:

...But it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

When Christ came He did two things:

- He abolished death, and
- He brought to light immortality and life.

In other words, He abolished the second death on the cross. And the greatest proof I can give you is the fact that, even when you accept Christ, as a Christian, you still have to die the first death. Christians have funerals, don't they? Yes. But we don't have to mourn like the unbeliever because that first death is only sleep.

But Revelation 20:6 says:

Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Those who accept Christ, those who have part in the first resurrection, on them the second death has no power. Why? Because Jesus abolished that death!

3. But now number 3, a very important point I want to bring up. Salvation from the second death and the verdict of justification to life, these two things, are God's supreme gift, in Christ, to

humanity. So when you talk about God's gift to the world, it is these two things which were accomplished in the holy history of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He liberated us from the second death, and number two, He gave us justification unto life. These are the two things. This constitutes the good news of the gospel. This is what Jesus commissioned His disciples to go and tell the world: "Tell the world that I have rewritten their history in My Son, and in that history they have been liberated from the second death, and they have received eternal life."

This is the Good News. BUT — there's a "but" there — like any gift, it has to be received to be enjoyed. When you get a gift all wrapped up in a parcel, that gift is valueless unless you open up the parcel. The gift of God is for all people, but if you refuse that gift you cannot enjoy it.

That brings us to the most important point. Those who knowingly, willfully, and persistently

(those three words: knowingly, willfully, and persistently) reject God's gift of salvation in Christ are deliberately choosing the second death instead of eternal life. Since God is a just God, in the judgment He will give them what they have chosen. But they can blame Adam no longer. Because Christ cancelled the death that pertained to Adam or even to our own personal sin.

The only person they can blame is themselves. They can't blame Adam, they can't blame God, for God will say, I did EVERYTHING to save you, in My Son ... and you refused.

If you deliberately, willfully, knowingly, and persistently reject the gospel, there is no hope for you. There is no hope. The only reason man is lost is because of unbelief. UNBELIEF is one sin God cannot forgive because unbelief is knowingly, willfully, persistently rejecting the gift of God.

And I want now to turn, in my conclusion, to the text that clearly presents this. Hebrews chapter 10. But as you you're turning to Hebrews, first

look at chapter 2, verse 3. Here it is, Hebrews 2:3:

...How shall we escape [the judgment] if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

But Hebrews 10:26 is really what I want to give you. Now I want you to look at this in the context of the gospel, because Hebrews 10 is dealing with the gospel. Verse 26, a text that is so difficult for many of us to understand because of our misconceptions of the “Two Adams” and of the gospel. But here it is now, Hebrews 10:26:

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left....

Now the word “sin” to us normally means transgression of the law, but I would like to remind you that the word “sin” here must be given the same definition as Christ gave the definition of sin in John 16:9 where He defines sin as unbelief:

[When the Holy Spirit comes, he will convict the world of guilt...] In regard to sin, because men do not believe in me....

The Holy Spirit will convince the world of sin because they do not believe in Jesus. Hebrews 10:26 is saying, “If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth (which you have done today), if you now willfully, deliberately reject the knowledge of the truth (and the truth is Jesus Christ: “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life,” John 14:6), there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin.

Now I want you to look at Hebrews 10:14. There I read:

...Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

And who are sanctified, made perfect? Those who enter into God’s rest, of which the Sabbath is a sign. The “rest” is belief, because Hebrews 4:2-3

makes it clear:

For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did, but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

“For we who believe do enter into His rest.” Okay, now, here it is. If you deliberately reject that sacrifice, there is no other sacrifice that can take away your sins. That’s what he’s saying. What is left? Hebrews 10:27:

...No sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

This is the third angel, who says: “If you receive the mark of the beast (which is unbelief), then you will receive the wrath of God poured without mixture (without mercy), because you have

deliberately, willfully, persistently rejected the gospel.” There is nothing but a “fearful expectation of judgment.”

Hebrews 10:29 clarifies the issue clearly:

How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

So please understand, it was at infinite cost that God saved us in Christ. That salvation is perfect, complete, and full. But if you deliberately, willfully reject it, there is no hope for you. That is why Jesus said that [Matthew 24:14]:

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached into the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

What does He mean by the word “testimony” or “witness”? It means that you can no longer find

an excuse for being lost. Because once the gospel, the knowledge of the truth, comes to you, and you willfully reject it, you are inexcusable, because that salvation is a GIFT! It is much easier to be saved than to be lost, because to reject that gift is to choose the second death instead of eternal life and reigning with Christ.

But let us present the gospel to the world; that is what God has commissioned us to do. That is why it is my concern that you understand the Two Adams, because whether you are saved or whether you are lost depends on which humanity you belong to: the humanity in Adam or the humanity that was initiated in Christ.

But let me conclude with these words. When you accept your position in Christ, you have to say good-bye to Adam. You can't be in Adam and in Christ at the same time; they belong to opposite camps. I want you to keep this in mind as we come to chapter 6 of Romans. When you chose your position in Christ, you have to say good-bye to your position in Adam. And when you say good-

bye to Adam, you're not only saying good-bye to death, you're saying good-bye to sin. When you chose Christ, you're not only accepting life but you're choosing, accepting righteousness. Keep this in mind, because Paul will apply it as we come to chapter 6.

But I want you to understand the foundation, for Jesus said [John 8:32],

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Chapter 13

The Reign of Sin and Grace

(Romans 5:19-21)

I receive in the mail now and then a little package that comes from Palo Alto, California. It's a bunch of papers called "Discovery Papers" and they are actual transcripts of Biblical sermons preached by different Evangelical preachers put together by a very famous evangelical scholar by the name of Ray Steadman. He does it because he has a tremendous burden; his burden is the preaching of the Bible be restored in the pulpits of North America. I think it is a very worthwhile burden because the crying need of not only the Evangelicals but the Adventist church is Biblical preaching.

When I received my last package, I looked through to see what the sermons were all about and one of the sermons was on Romans 5:12-21. My ears pricked because normally most preachers,

Evangelical or Adventist, won't touch this passage. It's too controversial; it has too many difficulties. And I said, "Here is somebody who is trying to preach it, I wonder what he has to say."

I read through the paper but, unfortunately, he tried to deal with the whole passage in one sermon. You cannot do justice to such a passage in one sermon but I was impressed at his introduction; so I thought I would read it to you because it is basically what I have been trying to tell you and I am glad that there is somebody else who feels the same.

The preacher is Brian Morgan and this is what he says in his introduction: "Of all of Romans, I find this text [i.e., Rom.5:12-21] the most difficult to teach. In fact, I was dreading it." [He wanted to bypass it, but he felt his conscience wouldn't allow him.] "For years I taught this material without discovering a clear outline or an understanding of Paul's argument." If you read most of the Evangelical scholars on this passage you will see what he's talking about. "But, as I meditated on

this truth this week, I realized that our difficulty lies in the fact that we do not approach this passage with the mind of Paul. Because we do not think as he does, we cannot fully comprehend the thoughts of God.” So how does he solve this problem? Here it is: “By changing my way of thinking.” Not by changing Paul’s way of thinking, which is what most people do, but “by changing my way of thinking, the magnitude and the glory of the work of Christ revealed in the passage became greater than ever before.”

Then he ends, “I pray that this might happen for you as well,” and this is my prayer, too.

I’m convinced that it is essential that we understand this passage to understand “Christ our Righteousness.” It is essential to understand this passage to understand the “In Christ Motif” which is the central theme of Paul’s theology. To me, it is crucial that we understand this passage if we are to understand Romans 6, 7, and 8, which are key passages in Romans.

As I said before, please put away your preconceived ideas. Come to this text with an open mind. I was amazed that, when this man came to the text with an open mind, we came to the basic same conclusion. So it gave me courage. But I will respect you if we disagree. However, please be honest with the text. Don't go beating around the bush; give me a correct exegesis of this text. If I'm wrong, I'm willing to change, but be honest with the text.

Now we're spending three studies on this. We've covered two and we come to our final study on this passage. I want to remind you that, in the last study we dealt with verses 15 to 18 and we discovered that, because of Adam's sin, we received condemnation and the sentence of death. And because of Christ's obedience, we receive the verdict of justification by faith. Christ cancelled not only Adam's sin, but ours also by His life and death.

As I mentioned once before, this is the passage that is used primarily by those who teach the

doctrine of “original sin.” I want to go on record so that you are aware of my thinking on this. I believe that Augustine was the one who coined the term “original sin” and he had a mixture of truth and error. For example, he taught “original guilt,” which is unbiblical because guilt in its legal sense involves responsibility; it involves volition. And God doesn’t hold me responsible for Adam’s sin. He doesn’t hold me guilty. The Bible doesn’t teach that.

Yes, I participated in his sin so I suffer the results, but I am not guilty. I am guilty, according to the New Testament, if I willfully, deliberately reject the gift of God, Jesus Christ; then I become responsible.

This teaching of Augustine was a mixture of truth and error. He taught that every baby is born with a stain of sin, which is unbiblical, and which has to be removed by baptism, which is also wrong. Baptism doesn’t remove any stain of sin, Adam’s or yours. Baptism is a public confession of faith and we will deal with this and the

significance of baptism at another time when we study Romans 6.

Please remember that, while Augustine had errors, so did Pelagian, who was the opposite of Augustine and who taught that babies are born innocent. He was just as much a heretic. So whichever we belong to, we must forget names; we must go to Scripture and ask God, “What are You saying?”

When we come to Romans 5, verse 19, we discover that Paul adds another dimension to our problem in Adam and also another dimension to the solution in Christ. So let’s look at verse 19. What is this added dimension that Paul adds to what he said in verses 15 to 18?

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners....

I’m not saying it; Paul is saying it. Adam’s sin not only brings the condemnation of death, but Adam’s sin made us sinners. But many don’t like

that. Many feel that babies are born innocent and that it is when they sin they are made sinners; so they don't like the word "made." The Greek word actually means "constituted." But whatever meaning you give the word, you have to give the same meaning when it's used in terms of Christ and us, because Paul uses the very same verb. He doesn't use a different word; the tense is different but the verb is identical. The same word is used in terms of Adam and us and in terms of Christ.

Now let me emphasize this because if you get this wrong in terms of Adam you will go wrong in terms of Christ. For example, let me start with babies. The New Testament and the Old Testament have very little to say about the salvation of babies and I prefer to keep silent. So is E.G. White. The fact that she makes one statement in The Great Controversy that when Christ comes there will be some babies who are resurrected without mothers does not prove that all babies will be saved because they are innocent. That's reading into the statement more than she is saying. The Bible is silent. I have my views and I

can explain them to you if you come to me privately. But I will not express them here because I prefer to stick with Scripture and the Bible is silent.

However, I do know one thing from Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White and that is that no human being — whether it's a baby or an adult, whether it's male or female or whether Jew or Gentile, whether you lived in Old Testament times or New Testament times — no human being will be in heaven apart from the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Everybody born in this world needs a Savior and nobody will be in heaven apart from the grace of Christ. That is the clear teaching of the Scriptures.

Now we come to the second issue which is a continuation of the first. “Do we sin because we are sinners, or is it our sin that made us sinners?” Which is true? Let me put it another way. When does an apple tree become an apple tree: from the time it germinates, from the time it's a seed, or when it begins producing fruit? If I go to the

nursery to buy an apple tree and I say to the man, “I need an apple tree.”

“Well,” he replies, “this tree looks like an apple tree but I can’t guarantee that it is. You wait until it produces fruit and then you will know whether or not it’s an apple tree.”

Do you think I’ll buy that tree? I’d say to the man, “Where did you go to school? You’d better learn your job before you sell things you’re not sure of.” How do I know it’s not a crab apple? I don’t want crab apples, although some folks can make jam out of it. I don’t enjoy jam; I like apples.

When do we become sinners? According to this passage, we are made sinners by Adam’s sin. Therefore, we are born sinners and our sins are simply the fruit of what we already are. Now if I reverse it, then I have to reverse my situation in Christ. Is it my righteousness that makes me righteous or is my righteousness evidence or fruits of what I already am in Christ? Does God first make you righteous before He declares you

righteous? If you teach that, I have news for you, you belong to the Roman Catholic Church and your name has no right to be in the Adventist Church, because that is Roman Catholic theology: God infuses you with grace, makes you righteous, then He declares you a saint.

But I thank God that all believers, according to Paul, are sanctified. Look at 1 Corinthians, where Paul introduces his letter; he's talking to the "saints" in Corinth. 1 Corinthians 1:2:

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — their Lord and ours....

They were anything but saints in their behavior, but he calls them saints because, in Christ, we are righteous. The righteousness that God produces in me is simply the evidence, the fruit of what I already am in Christ. This is the conclusion, if I understand Romans 5:19. Let's look at the text a little closer. First of all, let's read the whole verse,

Romans 5:19:

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Is there any difference between those two statements, especially in the word “made”? You will discover there is a difference in the tense. Paul uses what we call in Greek the “aorist” tense when he talks in terms of our position in Adam. He uses the future tense when he talks of our situation in Christ. In other words, everyone of us was already born a sinner because Adam made us sinners at the fall. When we are born, we are born sinners (past tense). But we are not yet made righteous. We will be made righteous at the second coming of Christ when “this corruption puts on incorruption.” Then and only then will you and I and all of us be made righteous who accept Christ. Until then, the just shall live by faith. And both justification and sanctification are by faith alone.

Now let me give you some texts to show that this is what Paul is teaching in other places. Turn to 1 Corinthians 15:49. Paul is saying the same thing but from a different angle. Read verses 48 and 49 to get the whole picture. 1 Corinthians 15:48:

As was the earthly man [Adam], so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven.

Adam was made of dust and you and I were born made of dust. “Those who are of heaven” are those who accept Christ. Now look at verse 49. When will this take place?

And just as we have borne [please notice, it is not future, it is something that is already true of us] the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear [future] the likeness of the man from heaven.

When shall we bear? Paul goes on to explain it was sown in corruption, it was raised in incorruption. At the resurrection, we shall be

raised incorruptible. Read the whole passage of chapter 15. By the way, 1 Corinthians 15:21 to the end deals with the same topic, the two Adams. Maybe I should read you verses 21 and 22, which is the key statement on this passage in Corinthians:

For since death came through a man [singular], the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man [singular again]. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive [future tense].

We shall be made alive in Christ; we shall be made righteous (future tense), but now we are righteous only in Him by faith. Our position in Him is by faith not by reality. Does this mean that we can't live a righteous life? No, I'm not saying that; we'll come to that when we reach verse 21. But I'm simply saying that even when God gives you total victory over sin you are still a sinner by nature. Your nature will not change until the second coming of Christ, and this is what Paul means when he says we are made or constituted sinners through Adam's sin.

I would recommend that you read the second chapter of Steps to Christ [by Ellen G. White]. When Adam sinned, his nature became bent. Love disappeared; selfishness took its place. And we were born, every one of us, with a bent towards sin which is with Satan and not with God.

But now let's go on, back to Romans 5. In Romans 5:20 Paul proves what he says in verse 19:

The law was added so that the trespass might increase.

Some translations read, "the law entered..." Let's look at the word "entered." Entered what? What did Paul mean? It entered what?

God came to Abraham and gave him a promise. The promise was of a Messiah that He had given before to Adam and Eve at the fall. Four hundred years after Abraham, God comes to Moses and says, "You know, Moses, I really goofed up. I meant to give the law to Abraham but I forgot so I need to add this."

Did He do that? Was the law added as an extra requirement for salvation which He forgot to give Abraham? No. What Paul means by the word “entered” is the law entered the promise. The reason God gave the law was not an extra requirement to faith. “The law entered that the offense might abound” [KJV]. If you look at the statement at its face value it sounds terrible. It sounds as if God gave the law to increase sin; but that is not what Paul is saying. Look at the word “offense” or “trespass” or whatever word is used in your translation. Is it singular or plural? Is it “offenses” or “offense”? It is singular. Therefore, in the light of the context of this passage, the word “offense” or “trespass” from verse 15 onwards, all through, always refers to Adam’s sin.

So what is Paul saying in the first half of Romans 5, verse 20? He has told us in verse 19 that Adam’s sin made us sinners. Now let’s go back to verse 19 again because there is something I need to add. Let’s read the statement again. Romans 5:19:

For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners....

Some translations read “many,” which has caused a problem to many of our people. They say that not all were made sinners, only “many.” The King James Version omits one word that is in the original, and that’s the word “the,” the definite article. So what Paul is really saying in verse 19 is, “THE many were made sinners.”

And when he uses the definite article it means, “the human race, mankind.” The same is true in verse 15. Paul is saying in verse 19 that Adam’s sin made the human race sinners. Then in verse 20 he says that God gave the law to prove that Adam’s sin made the human race sinners. In other words, we were all born sinners, and sinners all produce sin. But how do you know that you are a sinner? Who told you that you are a sinner? The law. God gave the law to prove that this human race produced by Adam is a bunch of sinners. That is why, in chapter 7, Paul says [Romans 7:7]:

...Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law.

It was Adam who made us sinners. God gave the law to open our eyes to prove to us that we are sinners. Why? So that we may accept His grace, His Son Jesus Christ. Because He goes on to say in the second half of Romans 5:20 that:

But where sin increased, grace increased all the more....

We are sinners by nature. Therefore, the only thing that you and I can produce is sin. You cannot produce righteousness out of sin. That is impossible.

I mentioned this illustration before, but I will repeat it. When we were in Kenya, two brilliant young men from Oxford University came to our college there. Since I was in charge of the Department of Religion, they asked me if they could show a film on moral rearmament. It is a

movement that is dying out today but it was a theory that, if every human being could arm themselves with three fundamental principles — love, purity, and honesty — this world would have peace and we would have no need of war. They had a beautiful film. You know what films are like, they can prove anything. They can make you do anything; you know Hollywood is expert at that. They were trying to prove to young people that if they armed themselves with these three fundamental principles, Africa would be a wonderful place to live in.

They needed my permission to show the film. So I said, “I have nothing against this film. I appreciate your concern, but you are trying to produce bananas from an orange tree.”

They asked me what I meant, so I told them, “You can only produce sin from sinners and you are trying to produce righteousness from sinners. You can’t do that, only God can. The thing you need to teach is that you must be born again. That is what Jesus taught Nicodemus. He said, “Flesh

gives birth to flesh” [John 3:6]. That which is born of the flesh will always remain flesh, and the flesh can only produce sin. It can produce self-righteousness, but in God’s eyes, self-righteousness is sin also. It may not be in our eyes, but it is in God’s eyes.

Remember that the law simply proved that we human beings are sinners. The law did not make us sin, it simply took the lid off of our self-respectability and showed us what we are like inside: rotten. Don’t tell me that babies are not born sinners. When they awake at 3:00 a.m. and demand breakfast, if that is not sin I don’t know what is. I couldn’t tell our son to go back to sleep, that 6:00 a.m. is breakfast time. “Nothing doing! I want it now!” He got it from me and I got it from my parents and so on and so on until we come to Adam. Now let’s go on to the second half of verse 20:

But where sin increased, grace increased all the more....

What God did in Christ is superabundance. He not only cancelled Adam's sin but He also cancelled our sins — past, present, and future. We touched that in verse 16. But more than that, He did not only cancel sin (which would make us neutral, clear up a bad debt), He also brought in the verdict of justification to life for all men. He didn't only do that. He did much more. He condemned sin in the flesh. So where sin increased, grace increased all the more. He did it for us, He did it for the whole human race. In view of this, Paul says in verse 21:

...So that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You were born a sinner and if you allow sin to reign in your life it would end up with eternal death. But now that grace has come in, may grace reign through righteousness to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ. You see, Adam brought to this world a reign of sin. You and I were born under that reign. You had no choice. Just like you

had no choice being born in America. You had no choice.

When we first came to this country in 1964, I was on a student visa and they charged me Social Security even though I was not an American citizen. One day I asked the Social Security people why I had to pay Social Security since I wasn't born here and I wouldn't enjoy the benefits. He said, "Too bad, you were born in the wrong country." Well, I wish I knew who he was. I would write him and say, "Now I belong to this country. Shell out that money so that I can retire." Now they're telling me it's about to go bankrupt. You can't win in this world but by grace we have much more than what this world and what this country can give us.

Now Paul is here saying that we were born under the reign of sin and death and, if you remain there, you would end up dying eternally. But we don't need to remain there, he says, because there has been a new reign that has been established in Christ Jesus and if we move to that reign, letting it

reign over us, producing righteousness in us, the end will be eternal life.

I would like to turn back to 1 Corinthians 15 because there is a point that is not extremely clear in Romans 5:19-21 but which Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 15. This chapter is important as it helps us understand the reign of sin and the reign of grace. So please turn once again to 1 Corinthians 15. And this time I'm going to look at two verses, 45 and 47. I want you to notice the two terms Paul uses concerning Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:45,47:

So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. ...The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven.

Now look at the two terms applied to Christ. In verse 45 He is called the "the last Adam." (By the way, the term "second Adam," does not appear in the New Testament. It's a term used by Ellen G. White. Nothing wrong with the term as long as

you don't bring a third Adam; there's no third Adam. The second Adam is also the last Adam, but the New Testament only uses the expression "the last Adam.") In verse 47, He is called the "second man."

These two terms — "last Adam" and "second man" — are very significant, especially as you read the entire passage. What do they mean? As the last Adam, Christ gathered to Himself all that is of the first Adam, i.e., you and me and everybody else. He gathered to Himself all that is of the first Adam and He did away with the Adamic race at the cross. Because the life of Adam has to die; there is no choice there. The Lord never changes and Christ did not come to change the law or to sidetrack it. He came to fulfill it and the law says [Ezekiel 18:4]:

The soul who sins is the one who will die.

And we have sinned in Adam plus we have our personal sins. So whichever way you look at it, we have to die. At the cross, in Christ, the human

race, died. That is why in 2 Corinthians 5:14 Paul says:

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

The death of Christ was not one man dying in the place of all men, which is the false teaching of substitution. It was all men dying in one man, which is the Biblical definition of substitution. We all died, the Adamic race came to an end, at the cross. But in the resurrection, God raised up the human race, in Christ, with a new life, the very life of His Son, which is eternal and which is immortal. And so I read in in 1 John 5:11

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

So Christ rose up with a new human race that was redeemed from the old. It is in this sense Paul can say in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

To review from Romans 5:

Verse 15. Adam's sin brought death "to the many." "The many" refers to mankind; the context makes that clear. Adam's sin brought death to the many, that's mankind. Likewise, Christ's obedience brought the gift of grace — that is, life — to the many. I want to remind you, it is a gift. The word "gift" is not used in reference to Adam; it is used in reference to Christ.

Verse 16. Adam's sin resulted in the judgment of condemnation to all humanity. Christ's obedience did much more. He did not only cancel Adam's sin, but all our personal sins, past, present, and future. In reference to us, it was all future because He died 2,000 years ago. And that's why Paul uses the word "many offenses" or "trespasses." He did not only cancel that but He brought the gift of justification to all humanity.

Verse 17. Death rules or reigns over all mankind because of Adam's sin. Much more those who receive (and I emphasize the word because a gift to be enjoyed has to be received) the gift of Christ's abundant grace and righteousness will rule with Christ throughout eternity.

Verse 18. Because of Adam's sin, all humanity faces the eternal death sentence. In other words, we are all born in death row; that is where we belong by nature. And if you want a good text, which I challenge those who don't like this statement to look at, it's Eph. 2:3:

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

“We are by nature the children of wrath,” which is saying the same thing as here. In the same way, says Paul, Christ's perfect righteousness brought the verdict of justification to life to all humanity. This, by the way, constitutes the good

news of the gospel.

Verse 19. Adam's sin resulted in all men being born sinners, that is, with a sinful nature, which, by the way, Paul does call sin in Romans 7. He talks about sin dwelling in him: "the law of sin at work within my members" [Romans 7:23]. Christ's obedience will result in all born again Christians to be made righteous, i.e., with a glorified nature at the second coming of Christ.

Verse 20. The law simply proves that Adam's sin has produced a human race of sinners. The law did not make us sinners; it simply proved what we already are in Adam. But much more Christ's saving grace has not only redeemed humanity from sin but also legally justified all men in Christ.

Verse 21. Therefore, just as sin dominates all men from birth, and would do so until death, let now grace take over, says Paul (that's what he means by the word "might" in "grace might reign"), let grace now take over and dominate your life, producing righteousness, until eternity is

ushered in by Christ's second advent.

Okay, these are the facts. But simply giving you the exegesis of a passage is not preaching; it has to be applied to our lives. So I want to apply this. I want you to listen very closely now. I just have three points, but very important:

1. Every baby is born under the reign of sin, condemnation, and death, because of the fall. By the way, Paul is simply proving here what we already covered in Romans 3:9-20: "All are under sin, there is none righteous, there is none that does good." Why? He explains that "why" here; it's because of the fall.

To continue to live under this reign is to end up with eternal death. There is no reason why we should remain under this reign. Why? Because Christ has made a way of escape. To deliberately remain under this reign is to ask for eternal death, which means that you can no longer blame Adam. Because no longer are we lost because of Adam's sin, because that was cancelled by Christ. We are

lost because we deliberately, willfully, persistently reject the gift of God.

That's why the real issue in the judgment is not the "sin question" but the "Son question." God will ask each unbeliever, "Why did you deliberately reject My Son, Whom I gave you at infinite cost?" (I've already touched on this last study.) To accept this gift of grace by faith is to live under the reign of righteousness which ends up with eternal life.

2. You cannot — and I repeat, folks, you cannot — chose to remain in Adam. You're born in Adam but you cannot chose to remain in Adam and at the same time accept by faith to be in Christ, because these two men represent two opposite camps. One represents sin; One represents righteousness. One represents death; One represent life.

You can't have it both ways. You can't say, "I'll accept Christ because I want to go to heaven, but at the same time I want to enjoy sin." That's a

contradiction, and when we come to Romans 6 we will see, he brings it out very clearly that you can't. To receive Christ, the Author of Righteousness, means to say "good-bye" to Adam, the author of sin. That is why I touched 1 Corinthians 15:45 and 47. He did away with Adam and raised up you in a new humanity. So, if you want to accept Christ, you have to give up your position in Adam.

Let me put it this way, and I will explain it in more detail when we come to Romans 6. In this world, you begin by life that is passed on to you from Adam. But you end up with death, because the life he passes on to you is a life that is condemned to death. So you begin with life in this world, and you end up with death. In the gospel, it is the reverse: you begin with death and you end up with life. And there is no life unless you first die. You cannot belong to Adam and Christ at the same time.

Several years ago there was a man who emigrated to America from Germany. He was very clever and became an excellent photographer; he

became a millionaire in this country in New York. Several years later, He decided to visit His homeland, Germany, that was his birthplace. And because he was famous, and because he was wealthy, He wrote to Emperor William. And this is how he wrote: “You’ve probably heard of me. I am a German-American and I want to visit my birthplace, and I would like to have an audience with you.”

Emperor William wrote back, a very nice letter. He said, “Germans I know, and Americans I know, but German-Americans I do not know. If you were a German, and became an American, you no longer have the right to claim to be a German.”

When you become a Christian, you are no longer an “Adamite”; you’re a Christian. Your citizenship is in heaven. You are no longer of the world; you are living in the world, but you are no longer of it. You cannot be in Adam and in Christ at the same time. You have to make your choice. That is the clear teaching of the New Testament.

3. Your eternal destiny depends on which humanity you have chosen. When the Bible uses the word “unbelief” as a sin that brings eternal death (or as the unpardonable sin in the New Testament), it means a deliberate choosing to remain in Adam and the reign of sin. When you deliberately choose, after the gospel has come to you, to remain in Adam and under the reign of sin, then my advice for you is: don’t come to church; you’re wasting your time. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you will die. But please don’t expect to enjoy sin and go to heaven at the same time.

Now I’m not talking of the struggle, I’m talking now of choosing. Unbelief is the deliberate, willful choosing to remain under the reign of sin which is in Adam. Belief means willfully choosing to be in Christ and in the reign of righteousness. And this Paul spells out in detail when we come to the second half of Romans 6. The master you have chosen you must serve: sin unto death or righteousness unto life. You can’t have both. And that is why this passage is crucial in order for you

to understand chapter 6, 7, and 8.

So what is Paul telling us. He thinks there are two humanities: one that was introduced by Adam's fall and the other one that was initiated by Christ's obedience, His life and His death. We are by nature in Adam. We are born in Adam; therefore, by nature, we are children of wrath. But "whoever believes in Jesus Christ shall not perish but have eternal life." It is possible for every one of us to move from that position to the new humanity, because, in Christ, God has already accomplished it as a gift.

He put you in Christ 2,000 years ago, and rewrote your history in Christ, so that, in Him, you stand perfect, or, as I may use the words of Steps to Christ, "God looks at you as if you had never sinned" (in Christ) and He gave you a new life, a new position, and a new destiny. And He says, "Please, will you accept it? I can't force it, I'm not a Communist, please accept it." And if you say, "Yes," then Jesus will say to you what He said in John 5:24:

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

It is my prayer that on this platform you will build your Christianity. Christianity is not simply joining a denomination. Becoming a Seventh-day Adventist will not save you. Christianity is not baptism by the act; the act doesn't save anybody. It is the truth of baptism that saves.

And what is the truth of baptism? Dying in Christ, saying good-bye to Adam, being buried in Christ, terminating in sin, and resurrecting to newness of life in Christ. And that is why it is important that we really preach the true meaning of baptism.

I even heard last week on the radio that baptism is a memorial service. Show me one text in the Bible that teaches that. Baptism is not a memorial service; it is a confession service. The Lord's

Supper is a memorial service. But baptism is a confession to the world, just like when my wife and I became American citizens. We had to swear that we would give up all allegiance to foreign potentates. My wife said in her heart, “I can’t say good-bye to the queen.” But you can’t belong to Britain and America. Now I know there are people with dual passports; but, when it comes to a crisis, you have to choose one.

And as for me and my household I have chosen Christ, to be my Righteousness, to be my Life, to be my Savior and my Hope. And I have lost all confidence in the flesh.

It my prayer that you will join me. And if we build our Christianity on this platform, the platform of “not I, but Christ,” there will be revival in this church, and we will lighten this valley not with our human glory but with the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is my prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Chapter 14

Baptized into Christ

(Romans 6:3-6)

“Our first baptism was not genuine. Some of us were forced into it; some of us were pressured by our friends; some of us were baptized because our classmates were baptized. But one thing we all have in common: we did not understand the meaning of baptism. And so would you please rebaptize us? We want it to be genuine.”

This was the request of 450 young people who wanted to be rebaptized. They had not experienced the new birth.

Unfortunately, that experience is not unique. There are a great number of Christians, in all denominations, who have been baptized, but who were “buried alive.” I remind my pastors when I train them, that it is a crime to bury anyone that is alive. A pastor only has authority to bury dead

people.

I would like, therefore, to look at Romans 6:3-6 which is the clearest explanation of the significance of baptism. As a people, we have put tremendous emphasis on the mode of baptism. Even though you may have the correct mode, that doesn't mean that you have the truth. The mode is correct only when it signifies the truth.

Many Christians have not understood the true meaning of baptism. I had the same experience. I was taught — and I was 25 — that baptism is a memorial service. I can't find a single text that says that. Baptism is not a memorial service; the Lord's Supper is, yes. Baptism is a confession service. It's a public confession of a very special experience the believer who is baptized has experienced. We are looking now not at the mode, but at the truth. For Jesus said in Mark 16, where he gave the great commission in verses 15 and 16:

...Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is

baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Now baptism as an act is done by the pastor. He baptizes you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Baptism as a truth is not done by a pastor; it's done by the Holy Spirit.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 12. I want you to notice how Paul explains, (at least, he doesn't explain, but he states) the true significance of baptism.

The thief on the cross, whom Christ promised heaven, may not have gone through the act of baptism, but he certainly had to go through this, because it is this that Jesus meant. The act doesn't save anybody. The truth saves. The act becomes important only when it's accompanied by the truth. 1 Corinthians 12:13:

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Baptized not by one man (and please notice, the Spirit is in capital S, referring to the Holy Spirit) but we were all baptized into one Body, and that body refers to Christ. Now this is the truth of baptism, but this is the foundation. Let us now turn to Romans 6 and look at it in detail.

Now I'm ignoring the context. I will come to the context later. But Romans 6:3 begins with a statement: "Don't you know?" And the tragedy is that many Christians do not know.

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus....

That's the first thing I want to start with: baptism is always into Christ Jesus. It is not into the Seventh-day Adventist church or any other denomination, because no denomination can save you. It is into Christ Jesus. Yes, the pastor baptizes in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but the truth of baptism is always into Christ Jesus.

Now what did Paul mean by being baptized into Christ Jesus? Well, I'll give you a text that will help you. That's Galatians 3:27. Here Paul explains what it means to be baptized into Christ Jesus, because he uses the same phrase, but he also amplifies on it. So we read in verse 27 of Galatians 3 these words:

...For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Some translations read that those baptized "have put on Christ." They have become one with Christ. That's what it means to be baptized into Christ.

Let me explain this. In order for Christ to save us, in order for Him to be our Savior, He had to identify Himself with us. He had to take us unto Himself. In order for that salvation to become effective, in your case, in my case, we have to identify ourselves with Christ. It has to be reciprocal. Why? Because God is love. And even though He has redeemed all men in Christ, that

redemption can only become effective when you accept that identification with the holy history of Christ. Because God is love, He is not a Marxist.

You see, Marxism believes in sharing, but it shares at the point of a gun. God doesn't give you His Son at the point of a gun. He says, "I have given you my Son at infinite cost to me, but it is a gift to you. You have two choices: you can accept it or reject it." And so it has to be reciprocal. That is why Jesus said in John 15:4 to the Christian:

Remain in me, and I will remain in you....

It's a two-way thing for the picture to become complete.

So while it is true that all men have been legally justified in Christ, even though it is true that all men have already been reconciled in Jesus Christ, that salvation has to be made effective by faith and baptism. And baptism is simply the public confession of a faith union with Jesus Christ. That is what it means to be baptized into

Christ.

Now let's go on to the second half of Romans 6:3. Our union with Christ in baptism is not in any vague manner. It is very specific:

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

Which means that we accept His death as our death. It is crucial that we know this, otherwise, there is no effective justification. (I'll bring it out in a moment.) But first, what kind of death did Christ die? Paul explains that in Romans 6:10:

The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

So His death was to sin. What does that mean?

The law of God says, "The wages of sin is death." And it is a tragedy in our church that anyone does away with the legal framework of the

atonement. The law demands a death. Hebrews 9:22 says:

In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood [death] there is no forgiveness.

As it says in Ezekiel 18:4, “The soul who sins is the one who will die.” That’s the clear teaching of Scripture.

Christ did not come to change the death sentence. If He changed the death sentence, He would be breaking His own law. He came to fulfill the death sentence. And, on the cross, He died to sin. He met the justice of the law. And, when He rose again, He left sin in the grave, not for three days but forever. That’s why Paul says He died once. You cannot die the second death twice. The second death you can only die once, because it’s good-bye to that sinful life forever.

And when Christ rose up, says Paul in Romans 6:10:

The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives [now, the life of the resurrection], he lives to God.

What does He mean by that? What did sin do to Christ? It separated Him from God. Sin separates you from God. Do you know what that means? It means that it separates you from the source of life, of peace, of joy, of happiness.

And that's why Christ cried out in agony, with sweat of blood, "Father, Father, Why? Why have you forsaken Me?" He was experiencing the curse of the law. But never again will Christ be separated from His Father. Never again!

And so I go to verse 11. Romans 6:10 deals with Christ's death. But remember, a Christian is baptized into His death. Therefore, in verse 11 Paul says:

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

In other words, just as Christ brought sin to an end on the cross, now, by being baptized into Christ, you have said in your heart good-bye to sin. You have left it on the cross.

By the way, it is this that was nailed on the cross. It was against us, it was contrary to us, it was condemning us, it was nailed with Christ. And you, in baptism, have put it there of your own choice. You have said, “This life of sin deserves to be on the cross and nowhere else.”

Now you can live unto God. For it says in the second half of verse 11 that you are “alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Do you know that God will never separate Himself from you who have been baptized into Christ? There will never be a separation. Yes, there will be a separation for those who ultimately, persistently reject the gift of Christ at the end of the millennium. God will withdraw Himself and, when He does that, the source of life is gone.

But with you who have been baptized into His death and have been raised with Christ there will never be a separation, because God has promised that. But now let's go on. Let's go back to Romans 6:4:

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

What do you do with a person who is dead? You can keep him for awhile, but, eventually, he has to go down under. You have to bury him. And in this context I want you to know what Ellen G. White said. She was not commenting on this passage; she was applying it to this church. She says:

“The new birth is a rare experience in this age of the world. This is the reason why there are so many perplexities in the churches. Many, so many who assume the name of Christ, are unsanctified

and unholy. They have been baptized, but they were buried alive. Self did not die and, therefore, they did not rise to newness of life in Christ.”

May I warn every theological student here, don't you ever bury anyone alive. You have no right to. Make sure that you confront them with the cross of Christ. They may say yes to the 13 points of [Adventist] doctrine, but if they say no to the cross of Christ, you have no right to baptize them.

But when I read, “This is the reason why there are so many perplexities in the churches,” I know why so many ministers have to lose their hair, trying to solve the perplexities, put out the brush fires, everywhere in the world. And that is why many ministers are giving up. They can't take it. But I thank God that the grace of God is able to keep them. Now let's finish verse 4, which says:

1. You died with Christ.
2. You are buried.

There is a very interesting society in England that prevents the premature burial of people who have not died. They give several incidents in their literature. One of them occurred right here in America, in California. They buried a man, he was covered and everything and, in the middle of the night, the man who was in charge of the cemetery was walking along and he heard some noise. It was right where the person was buried. He rushed to the police and they dug it out. It was too late. They opened the coffin. Obviously, this man came back to life and was trying to come out. He pulled his hair out. He was frantic. He was buried before he died.

That was a tragedy. But, I'll tell you, it's a worse tragedy when people are buried when they're not spiritually dead. Because they do come out. They don't remain in the grave. They come out. But the trouble is, they give the pastors and every other member headaches. We need to remember this. That is why the next quotation from E.G. White is:

“The accession of members who have not been renewed in heart and reformed in life is a source of weakness to the church. This fact is ignored. HENCE, MANY JOIN THE CHURCH WITHOUT FIRST BECOMING UNITED TO CHRIST.” [Emphasis by Pastor Sequeira.]

Was your baptism a union with Christ crucified and buried?

But I thank God it goes on: not only do we die with Christ, not only are we buried with Him, but [Romans 6:4]:

...Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Every true Christian must say with the Apostle Paul what he says in Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ....

Not “Christ died in my place.” That is a false

concept of substitution. The death of Christ was a corporate death. One man cannot die in the place of another. The law won't allow that. Unless you die with Him, that death doesn't become legal to you. (I will come to it when we come to verse 8.) But there it is. We have died with Him, we are now to rise in newness of life. And Paul says [all of Galatians 2:20]:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

“I am crucified with Christ, but I am still living! Now, it is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live, I live by faith in the One Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

Let me jump now to Romans 6, verse 7. I made a statement, I want to back it up from scripture:

...Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Now that's what your English Bible says. That's not what the Greek says. You see, the word "freed" appears three times in Romans 6. The first time is in verse 7, the second time is in verse 18, and the third time is in verse 22. But verse 18 and verse 22 use the same word; verse 7 has another, completely different word. In fact, if you want a word in your English Bible that is identical to the word Paul uses for "freed" in verse 7, look at Acts 13:39 where the word is "justified":

Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.

The King James Version puts Romans 6:7 this way:

He that is dead is justified from sin.

That's the word Paul used: dikaiouno. That's

the Greek word He used: “justified,” not freed in the other sense.

Now what does it mean by the word, “justified”? Well, the translation “freed” is correct, because the word “justified” does mean “freed.” But free in what sense? Two things:

1. You are free from the rulership of sin. Remember, in Romans 3:9, where Paul concludes the sin problem, he says, “The whole world is under sin, ruled by sin, slaves to sin.” (Romans 7:14 brings that out too.) But now you and I are no longer under the rulership of sin. Why? The sin has died. The sin that rules over us has been crucified with Christ.

2. But there is a second sense where Paul is using the word “justified” which we need to know. Please notice, the law says, “The soul who sins is the one who will die” [Ezekiel 18:4]. The moment you are born in this world, even though your parents and your friends and your relatives and the visitors said, “You are a beautiful baby,” the law

said, “You must die.” We are born in death row because of the fall (see Romans 5:12-21). We are born under the condemnation of the law, by one man’s sin. And that law is relentless, will not give up, until you die. And when you die the law says, “Now I’m satisfied.” If I steal \$10,000 and I’m caught and sent to the penitentiary for five years, after those five years in prison, when I come out, no law can touch me for that crime. If the policeman tries, I can say, “Look, I am a free man now.” And it is in that sense that the law is satisfied.

So sin can no longer destroy you. Not because you’re good, but because you have already died in Christ. (We will touch that when we come to Romans 6:14.) But now I want to go to Romans 6:5:

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

The word that Paul uses is the word we use

today for grafting, where you take two branches and join them together as one. That is what baptism is. It is our grafting into Christ, crucified, buried, and resurrected. So:

If we have been united with him like this in his death [which is to sin], we will certainly [guaranteed, folks] also be united with him in his resurrection.

In other words, if your baptism is genuine, God says to you what Christ said to the thief: “Today, heaven is yours!” Your resurrection is guaranteed. But I want to make one thing very clear, and that is brought up in verse 8 of Romans 6:

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

I want you to notice very carefully what Paul is saying here. Because what he is saying here is in complete contradiction to our natural situation. Because, in this world, we begin with life.

Now don't ask me: when does life begin? That's the big argument over abortion. I believe life begins the moment conception takes place. But I'm not a medical man and I won't argue with you.

But you begin with life, you end up with death; that's the natural order of things. In the gospel, it is the opposite: you begin with death and you end up with life. And the word "if" in these two texts means that if you don't die, you don't live!

Let me give you another text that is much stronger. It's a text given to Timothy. And I know why Paul gave it to Timothy. It was because Timothy was young and many young people think they will never die. Don't kid yourselves, folks, you can die even as a kid. But turn to 2 Timothy 2:11 and listen to Paul's statement:

Here is a trustworthy saying: if we died with him, we will also live with him.

Please notice, if you refuse to die with Christ, you will not live with him. And if you were buried

alive, you don't have to go through the act again. I discovered the meaning of this passage 10 years after my actual baptism. I was already a minister for five years. Can you imagine what would happen if this minister would be rebaptized? There would be tongue-wagging: "I wonder what he did wrong?"

No, I had done nothing wrong; I just discovered the truth. So there in Uganda I did not ask for rebaptism. I went under a fig tree, very symbolic, and I said, "God, You have opened my eyes, I want to surrender to the truth. From now onwards, Lord, it is no longer I but Christ Who must live in me." And that must be the goal.

Now please remember, Romans 6 is dealing with attitude. Paul realizes that even though in your heart you have died to sin, you are still struggling, you are still falling, but in your heart you have said good-bye to sin. We will deal with that in more detail when we come to the actual study of the passage in its context.

But one thing is clear: there is no resurrection with Christ unless you first die with Him. It's as simple as that.

Then we go to Romans 6:6:

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin....

The King James Version reads: "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him." I've always hated that phrase in this text, because Paul did not use the phrase "old man." When I was growing up, my brother and I, when we always talked about my Dad, we called him the "old man." So when we were doing something mischievous, my brother would say, "The old man is coming around the corner."

We were smoking in the bathroom. Don't you ever try it, young folks; it wasn't worth it. We used to collect the stubs from my fathers cigarette.

And he would smoke, but he wouldn't allow us to smoke. What an example! Anyway, he wasn't a heavy smoker.

Please remember the “old man” is not your father, it is your old life. That's why the New International Version of the Bible says your “old self.” That's your old life that you were born with, that stood condemned, which had to die, which was crucified with Christ. Here Paul uses the phrase “old self,” but in Galatians he uses the word “I,” the old self-life.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with [or destroyed]....

But that's not what Paul says. So I will need to explain this. The actual thing that Paul says is: “...that the body of sin might be deprived of its power or may be rendered powerless.” That's what the Greek word says.

Now let me explain what he's saying here. The

Greeks believed that matter was evil. The Bible doesn't teach that. This body of ours is not evil. The problem is not my body. The problem is the driver. He is the rascal. Say we were to go in a long bus ride; it's a long way, so we have two drivers. The first driver is very reckless, he takes corners on two wheels, and every time he takes a corner, your heart is in your mouth because he's taking it on two wheels. You have no peace. The problem is not the bus; the problem is the driver. When he steps off and the new driver takes over — and he's a very careful driver — you sit back and relax and say, "Boy, this is a good driver!"

Well, "the flesh" is your old driver. And every day you have to remind him, because he has died on the cross as far as you are concerned — only by faith, and faith is not reality. He is still alive and, given the chance, he wants to pop his ugly head up. And I'll tell you the worst form of his ugly head: when he comes up in the guise of religion. He acts like a very "holy Joe." But he is the flesh. And so I have to remind you of the words of Jesus to Nicodemus [John 3:6]:

Flesh gives birth to flesh....

He may be able to do many good things. He may be able to do many religious things. But he's always motivated by self. So our works are polluted, filthy rags in God's eyes. It is only the Spirit, the new driver, that can produce righteousness in us. So we must say, everyday, "Not I, but Christ."

Paul says, "Do not walk in the flesh but walk in the Spirit" because the flesh is crucified. Galatians 5:24 says:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Please notice: the old man is crucified; therefore, this human body, which in itself is not sinful, has been deprived of its power of sin. The driver is dead.

Romans 6:6 ends:

...that we should no longer be slaves to sin....

Please don't come to me and say, "Pastor, I can't help it. I have a sinful nature."

I would say, "Friend, you need to be baptized."

Because, it is no longer "I, but Christ" Who must walk in us. And I'll tell you, the Christ of 2,000 years ago has not changed. He is the same today, tomorrow, and forever. And the life He lived, the life of love, the life of caring, the life of self-giving, He can live today in you. And the world needs to see that.

Well, I have given you a study; now I want to give you some examples from the Bible. Because the Bible uses this truth from many various angles. The first example is from the exodus. In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul takes the experience of the Jews, and links it with salvation. I read in verse 2 that, Moses being a type of Christ:

They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

And in verses 3 and 4:

They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink....

Please notice the symbolism here of the Lord's Supper. They ate and they drank the spiritual food. And then he defines what he means by this [in the rest of verse 4]:

...for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

But I want you to notice verse 5:

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert.

You see, the exodus out of Egypt was a symbol of salvation. Egypt represents the world. Pharaoh

represents Satan, the enemy of God. And the crossing of the Red Sea represents the baptism. Now they are heading for Canaan — the promised land — and, while they're going there, they are living on the spiritual food: the bread and blood of Jesus Christ. Now, there was a problem. They did not say good-bye to the life of Egypt. So while they were physically out of Egypt, their hearts were still there: “Oh, I wish we could go back. We miss the cucumbers, and the leeks, and especially the Kentucky Fried Chicken! We miss it.”

Therefore, their baptism was a sham. And you know what happened? They died in the wilderness. There are three kinds of people who will die: those who are unbelievers, those who are believers, and those who are in the wilderness. Of the three, the wilderness people are worst. I'll tell you why. Those who are in the world, they at least enjoy the world before they die. Those who are Christians will die, but then there's a resurrection, and eternal life. But in the wilderness, you have neither of the two. You don't even enjoy the world

fully, because every time you enjoy it, you're full of guilt. And you don't even enjoy heaven because you were buried alive.

So what did God do? He did not bring them back to Canaan until they were rebaptized. He did not take them the easy way, He took them through Petra. And those of you who have ever been through Petra know it's rocky, it's mountainous, it's really rugged. And they walked through that, and they came to the Jordan. Joshua 4:1-9:

When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, "Choose 12 men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight." So Joshua called together the 12 men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, and said to them, "Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the

number of the tribes of the Israelites, to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.” So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the Lord had told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down. Joshua set up the 12 stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day.

God said to Joshua, “Do two things, when you cross the Jordan [which is their rebaptism]. When you cross the Jordan take 12 stones from the wilderness, and put them in the middle of the river. And take 12 stones from the river, and take them to the promised land and build an altar.”

What did those 12 stones represent? “Twelve” represents the church. What God was saying to Joshua was, “The life of Egypt, which they brought with them, cannot go with them to Canaan. It must be buried in the Jordan. And the life of mine, which you must resurrect, must be taken to the promised land.” And so Jordan becomes the true baptism. That’s why Jesus was baptized not in the Red Sea, but in the Jordan. Remember what He said to John the Baptist? “You must baptize me to fulfill all righteousness.” Because that’s the true baptism.

In 1975, I was crossing the Jordan with my family; they have a bridge now, so you don’t have to wait for the waters to separate. I stopped in the middle of that bridge and I looked down at that dirty water. It’s very clean at the source in the Golan Heights, but when it comes to where the Jews crossed it in the exodus it’s quite dirty. And an Israeli soldier came with his rifle and bayonet and he dug me in the shoulder, in the waist. And I jumped, I said, “What’s up?”

He said, “What are you looking for!?” He thought maybe I was an Arab or somebody.

I said, “No, I’m looking for the stones.”

And he said, “What stones?”

I said, “The Bible says it’s ‘there unto this day.’ Don’t you know your history?”

And he said, “Oh yes, my mother believed in that stuff. I don’t.”

And I said, “Too bad! That’s why you’re losing the war.”

And he said, “Get along!”

And I said, “Okay sir.” Too bad, folks. He has given up the truth as it is in Christ.

In 1981, I took a week of prayer in Middle East College and one of the young men requested

baptism. He was a Maronite, which is an offshoot of the Roman Catholic Church. It's a Middle East religion; it's a Christian church. His parents were furious, absolutely furious. So the father came up to me, and he said, "Do you know what you're doing?"

I said, "Yes, I'm baptizing your son."

He said, "Let me tell you, when my son was two months old, I drove — at tremendous risk to myself — I drove all the way to the Jordan."

Now he was a Lebanese in the Arab camp. Don't you ever call a Lebanese an Arab, because they are Phoenicians. But he said, "I drove all the way to the Jordan. And I took a barrel of Jordan water, and I baptized my son in the very water in which Christ was baptized, and now you baptized him in this dirty Middle East College water."

"Retrogression," he said to me.

I said, "You may have baptized him in the

water, but may I ask you one question?”

He said, “Yes.”

“Did your baby, did this boy cry?”

“Yes,” he said, “he yelled his head off.”

“I’ll tell you why,” I replied. “He was rejecting that baptism. Now he is accepting it. That’s the difference.” And I explained to him the truth. He wouldn’t accept it.

He yelled, “You Adventists!”

Well, have you been buried alive? It is important that we know the truth of baptism.

I want to conclude with an experience I had in Ethiopia. I hope you don’t have to go through that experience. I’m especially talking to the young people. I took a week of prayer at the Adventist college in Ethiopia, and I gave the kids time for questions. There was an Egyptian there, a Janan

Egyptian. His name was Dahoud; he was a student of mechanized agriculture. He was a senior. Apparently, in the class, they had an argument with the teacher, a discussion, “Should Christians carry arms?”

Now in Egypt you have to serve two years in the military. And they don’t have, like you have in this country, a medical corps. You have to carry guns. So this Egyptian said to me, “Is it a sin for a Christian to carry arms?” Now he knew what the teacher had told him, that it is not right. But, unfortunately, the teacher had quoted Ellen G. White, and he wanted me to prove it from scripture, which is pretty right for him to ask.

So I said to him, “Dahoud, any Egyptian who does not fight for his country should be ashamed of himself.” And he liked that. But I said, “I’d like to ask you a question. Are you a Christian?”

He said, “Yes.”

Then I said, “Have you seen any dead

Egyptians fight for his country?”

He said, “No.”

I said, “If you’re a Christian, you are dead to that old life that belonged to Egypt. And you were raised in newness of life in Christ. And by the way....” Now this may not mean anything to you, but to him it meant something. “By the way,” I said, “Christ was a Jew.”

Have you told an Arab that he’s a Jew? He didn’t like it. He said, “No, I’m not dead!”

I said, “Well, I don’t want you to argue with me. I can give you a whole host of texts. Let me give you just one. I gave him Colossians 3:3. I said, “Please read it from your Bible, your Arabic Bible.” And he read it. And Paul says there:

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

He refused to accept it. I said, “Okay Dahoud,

I'm not going to argue." So I left; I went back to Addis Abbaba, which was 150 miles away. Two weeks later, just two weeks after the week of prayer, he and one of his instructors were testing out a John Deere tractor. Most of our colleges in Africa are on hills. They were trying this tractor, they were coming down this hill, and the brakes failed. Dahoud was sitting on the fender, and the driver, his instructor, was sitting on the seat. When the brakes failed, the tractor began gaining momentum because it was downhill. In his panic, he tried to slow down the tractor by bringing it to a lower gear, and the gears weren't synchronized, so the moment he got it into neutral, he could not get it into a lower gear. It just wouldn't go. So the momentum increased, and he went faster and faster, and the driver was white. He jumped off. "Save thyself." Dahoud froze on that fender. He was scared, too. He should have jumped. He didn't. The tractor hit a tree and he was pinned under it. It took them 20 minutes to lift that heavy stuff and pull him out.

We had a nurse there, she examined his heart

beat and said, “I’m afraid he’s dead.” He was crushed. His whole chest was crushed. There was a hospital three miles away and they rushed him there. The kids went into the chapel and began praying. Two doctors — one a Swede, the other an Ethiopian trained in the U.S. — examined him, and they both admitted that he was dead. They asked the nurse to take care of his body, and she went with a bed sheet to cover his body and, as she was covering his head, his eyes blinked. She cried out, “He’s alive!”

The Swedish doctor said, “I guess you’re imagining things.”

The Ethiopian doctor said, “Let me examine him again.” He used his stethoscope and examined him again and heard a faint heartbeat. Well, they didn’t have the needed equipment so they radioed our headquarters because we had a mission plane. We sent our plane and they brought him to our hospital in Addis Abbaba. He was there, unconscious, for about two weeks, all bandaged; they had done surgery and everything. Two weeks

later he gained consciousness. So I went to visit him.

His face was all covered with bandages. All there was open were his eyes and his mouth. He looked at me, and I looked at him, and I bent down to his ears, and I said, “Dahoud, how are you?”

He whispered to me, “Dahoud is dead. You’re talking to a Christian.”

He told me later on that God had taught him the hard way the truth as it is in Christ. He went back to Egypt, but refused to carry arms because he was a Christian.

I hope that you don’t have to go through that experience. It was bitter! He had scars for the rest of his life. But if you were buried alive, your baptism was a sham. It is my prayer that you will surrender to the cross today. Let us pray:

Loving Father, we thank you that Jesus was willing to go to the cross. Not for any sin that he

committed, but to meet the justice of the law, to bear the pain, the anguish of the second death for us. But Lord, we realize that unless we identify ourselves with Him crucified, buried, and resurrected, that great, supreme sacrifice is only a theory that has not yet been made effective in our lives. We ask you, Lord, that Thou wilt take us today, make us willing to be one with Christ, in His death, that we may be one with Him in His resurrection, is our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Chapter 15

The Danger of Libertinism

(Romans 6:1-13)

Review

We have already covered the first five chapters of Romans, and so, before we turn to chapter 6, I would like to go through a quick review so that you keep in mind what Paul has already told us, because Paul is a logical writer and we need to keep in mind what he has already told us.

After introducing himself, and his welcome, and his theme of this epistle, which is “The Gospel of God,” in chapter 1:18 right up to 3:20 he deals with the universal sin problem of mankind. He concludes with two facts:

1. The first fact is found in Romans 3:9:

What shall we conclude then? Are we any

better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.

All of us, Jews and Gentiles, with no exception, are all under sin. That means we are ruled by sin, we are slaves to it, and sin is our master.

2. Paul tells us in verse 3:19:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

We are also under the law and, because we are sinners, to be under the law means to be guilty and to be condemned.

So Paul paints a very dark, dismal picture of the human race in that section. Then, in chapter 3, with those two wonderful words, “But now,” verse 21 up to verse 31, he introduces the gospel. There are two things he tells us about the gospel:

1. First he defines the gospel as “the Righteousness of God,” and I want you always to remember that. The gospel is the righteousness of God. By that he means it is a righteousness:

- a. originated by God,
- b. planned by God,
- c. fulfilled by God, and
- d. it is all of God.

2. The second thing he tells us is that this righteousness is something we have not contributed to one iota. It’s all of God, fulfilled in Christ, without any contribution from us. Therefore, it is a gift to us so that we are saved by grace. When we accept that gift by faith, that is called Righteousness or Justification by faith.

In chapter 4, Paul goes on to defend this wonderful doctrine, this wonderful truth against the three-fold argument that came mainly from the Judaizers. And that is:

1. Our works,
2. Circumcision (which was of tremendous significance to the Jews), and
3. The law keeping...

...in no way contribute to Justification by faith. It is entirely the work of God.

In chapter 5, he turns now to the subjective experience, to the fruits of Justification by faith. Again, it is three-fold:

1. Peace with God. This is the crying need of many Adventists; they don't have peace. Please remember, the peace comes through faith, through Justification by faith, not what God does in you, but what He accomplished in Christ, which you have accepted by faith. Peace with God. But that is not all.

2. You are standing in grace, which means that you are now in a position where you can claim the power of God through the indwelling Spirit to live the life that God wants you to live.

3. There is a hope that Justification by faith brings to you, and that hope is two-fold:

- a. You can now experience the love of Christ and shed it abroad, the love “that seeketh not her own,” the love that is the power of the gospel, the love that is the fulfilling of the law.
- b. But the hope is also beyond that; the hope is also glorification, when this corruption will put on incorruption at the second coming of Christ.

Then, in the second half of chapter 5 of Romans, is a very difficult passage: Romans 5:12-21. Paul is really laying the foundation of our salvation and our condemnation. He has dealt with the universal sin problem, he has dealt with the righteousness of God, and now he is saying that the source of these two are Adam and Christ. We are lost in Adam in the same way that we are saved in Christ. In other words, your eternal destiny is

based on the performance of two men. In Adam all die; in Christ all shall be made alive. That is what Paul did.

Chapter Six

Now we go to chapter 6. I used chapter 6 in the last study to touch baptism, but I want to look now in its context. Chapter 6 of Romans is dealing with the DANGER of the gospel. You may ask, “Is the gospel dangerous?” Yes! I’m afraid it is dangerous. Whenever a pastor preaches the gospel, the true gospel, he is always in the danger of people twisting that message. And EVERYONE who preaches the everlasting gospel faces this problem.

Let me explain to you. You see, there are two things that the devil does not like, in fact, that he hates. And he does everything to keep these two things from you. These are:

1. A clear understanding of the love of God. He doesn’t want you to understand that

God's love is unconditional, that it is everlasting, that it never changes. He doesn't want you to know.

2. A clear understanding of the gospel. He doesn't want you to know the gospel.

So, what he has done, is to the unbelievers he has tried to blind their thinking. In fact, if you read 2 Corinthians 4:3,4, Paul tells us:

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age [Satan] has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

But he doesn't stop there. When he steps into the Christian church, how does he deal with Christians who have already accepted the gospel? Well, he has prepared two counterfeits; both resemble the gospel on the surface, but, at their foundations, they are the enemies of the gospel.

Let me explain to you what a counterfeit is. When I was a missionary in Ethiopia, my father wrote to me. He's a collector; he collects stamps, and he used to collect coins. He said, "In Ethiopia there is a coin called Marie Theresa. (It is a coin that was minted by the Italians when they ruled over Ethiopia for those five years, 1930 to 1935.) They are rare coins but I want you to find one because they are also very valuable coins."

So I spoke to an Ethiopian, I said, "Is it hard to get these coins?"

He said, "No, you can get them everywhere. The little kids on the street sell them to you."

So I stopped a kid who was selling trinkets and, sure enough, he had not one but three coins. I said, "Boy, I'm in luck." And I haggled with him; I felt I got a good price. It was still quite a bit of money, but my father said they're very valuable, so I thought he may give me something in return.

I sent the coins to my father and he wrote to me

and he said, “My son, you need to learn something. Only one of those three was genuine. The other two were counterfeits.”

But I could swear they had no difference. I looked and looked at them and I could not see any difference between the counterfeit and the genuine. But to the expert eye, they knew what was counterfeit and what was genuine. So he said, “The two counterfeits are worth nothing; you paid too much for them.” And I thought I had a bargain. But he thanked me for the one coin that was genuine.

So, when you look at these two counterfeits, without a clear understanding of the gospel, you fall for it, because Satan is very clever. Now what are these two counterfeits? We have labeled them.

1. The first one Paul already dealt with in Romans chapter four. We call it “legalism.” Legalism, in many areas, resembles the gospel.

2. The other one, there are many names for it, I

have chosen only one name: “libertinism.” But it’s sometimes called antinomianism. (“Anti” means “against” in the English language, and “nomianism” is from the Greek word nomos, which is the law.) “Libertinism” is the word I prefer to use now, or “cheap grace.” These are the terms. But, basically, this is what this false gospel teaches:

We have seen, so far, that the gospel is the righteousness of God, and that, in the holy history of Christ, everything that is necessary for you and for this rascal to go to heaven is already fulfilled. So what libertinism says is: “Since I am already saved by the doing and dying of Christ, since Christ did it all, then surely I have the liberty to do what I like.”

In other words, the gospel and its free gift of salvation is used now as an excuse to enjoy the things of this world and even sin (not gross sins but sinful desires that are fulfilled).

Well, I would like to make it clear as we look

at chapter 6 that this is not true. Liberty and license are not the same thing. Yes, the gospel sets me free, but it does not set me free to do as I please.

I remember when Kenya was getting independence from Britain. Some of the Africans were very wise; they played on this wonderful event. They bought little receipt pads and they went to all their fellow Africans who weren't too well educated and they said to them, "Do you know when we get independence [they called it "Uhuru"], these European cars will be ours. Do you want one?"

And they would say, "Yes."

"All you have to pay is two shillings and we'll give you a receipt and, when independence comes, that car is yours." So they went collecting money, giving them receipts. And on independence day you had these poor little fellows with their receipts looking for the number plates of their cars to see which car was theirs. They were deceived as to

what true independence meant.

But a few years later we were working in a school there in Kamagambo, and my wife enjoys visiting African markets. I think it's a waste of time for me, so I would drop her off, because it's very difficult to drive cars when there's chickens and donkeys going in front of you, so she let me do the driving. So I dropped her off at the market. I saw a group of Africans sitting all handcuffed. They were older men, and I said to myself, "Well, these fellows look very miserable. Let me go and sit down with them and have a chat." Since I spoke their language, I would talk to them as my wife did the shopping. I said, "What on earth have you done that you should be in handcuffs with a policeman with his rifle [guarding you]?"

One of the older men, he was the oldest of the group said to me, "When is independence going to be over?"

I said, "I'm sorry; it is here to stay."

“Oh,” he said, “I wish it was over.”

I asked, “You want the British back?”

He said, “Yes. This government has deceived us.”

“What do you mean?” I said.

He replied, “When we were told we were getting independence, we thought that now we won’t have to pay tax.”

They thought, “No tax paying because that is freedom.” The old man said, “You know what? We are paying more tax now than when the British were here. So we want them back.”

“Freedom means responsibility,” I told him. “If you want freedom, no longer can you depend on the British budget to help you out. You have to be self-supporting, and how do you think your government is going to support itself without charging you tax?”

“But,” he said, “they never told us this when they were fighting for independence and got our support.”

“Well,” I said, “that is typical for politicians. They never tell the truth, except what is appealing to our flesh.”

But Paul doesn't keep the truth away from us. He is telling us the truth. What does it mean to be free in Christ? Does it mean license to do what you like? The answer is no.

Now I mentioned earlier that the gospel is dangerous. I'm going to give you statements, wonderful statements, but dangerous. Because they are dangerous, some Pastors won't even quote them. But I am not paid to give my opinion; I am paid to quote scripture and so I am going to quote that to you. One is Romans 5:20, an excellent statement:

The law was added so that the trespass might

increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more....

What Paul meant by this statement is this: “It doesn’t matter how terrible a sinner you are, the gospel can save you.”

But you see, here is the problem: you and all of us have a nature that is not only sinful, even after conversion, but have a nature that loves sin. And stop deceiving yourself; yes, your converted MIND might hate sin, but your nature, all our natures, will love sin to your dying day.

So what happens when you read or hear of this wonderful statement that Paul makes in Romans 5:20? You can pervert the statement, and interpret it like this: “Oh, Paul, what you are saying is that grace is so wonderful that the more I sin the more grace will cancel my sin. Praise the Lord! Let us keep on sinning that grace may abound.”

Does Paul mean that? No, but the flesh tells you that’s what he means. So we pervert Paul for

our own personal benefit. And Paul will deal with that problem in verses 1 of Romans 6 right up to verse 14 of that same chapter.

Now let me give you a second statement. Now the second statement is a hard one, especially to Adventists; so I'm going to spend two studies on that part. I'm going to cover only up to verse 13 in this study. The second statement is found in Romans 6:14:

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

By the way, Paul did mean the Ten Commandments here. (We'll come to this. Paul spends quite a bit of time on this topic.)

Do you know what that means? It means that every time you fall, the law cannot condemn you because you're no longer under it. It means that sin has no longer authority to execute you.

Let me give you a text (and I'll deal with it in

detail in our next study). Look at 1 Corinthians 15:56:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

But where does sin get its authority to kill you? From the law. But if you are no longer under the law, sin can't do that to you. You are free from the condemnation of the law, and its curse. Under the law, every time you sin, the law says, "The soul that sins must die." But to a Christian, the law can't say that to you, because you're no longer under it, you're under grace.

Now I know that's heavy stuff. So be patient; in the next three studies we'll touch it. But it is good news; it is also dangerous news.

What I want to deal with now is the danger. The danger is in believing that, "since the law can't condemn me, then I can now do what I like."

Let me give you an example. My wife and I

worked mostly in Third World countries, and there the diplomats — that’s the embassy people — had what they call diplomatic immunity, which means the law of the land could not touch them. So if a diplomat was speeding and a policeman caught him speeding, he could not fine him. He had a special license plate with a “CD” on it, “Corps Diplomat,” and it meant that the police could not touch him. So a diplomat could speed and still go scot-free. He could park his car in the “No Parking” area and no policeman could give him a ticket. And some of them were doing that; they were enjoying the liberty they had to break the law of the country.

The flesh will say the same thing: “Keep on sinning. After all, you are no longer under the law. You’re under grace.” Does “under grace” give you that liberty? The answer is, “God forbid, it is unthinkable!”

So Paul is now dealing with the danger. I want to emphasize this, because there is a problem within our [Adventist] church. You need to know the historical background, because we need to take

into account Romans 6. Here is the problem.

Because of our historical background (trying to fight the dispensational teachings and other reasons), we as a church began to emphasize the law and the law and the law in our early years. The result is that we — not consciously, but subconsciously and unwittingly — became legalists. Then, in the 1950s, we realized that, if we are to produce ministers who are acknowledged by the American Association of Theology, the legal system of the theology in this country, we had to send our scholars to universities that would give them Ph.D.s so that they could come and teach to us.

These scholars — very fine men who were second, third, and even fourth generation Adventists — went to these universities (many of which were Evangelical) and there they discovered something that they never had in their own church: peace in Christ. It gave them such a wonderful feeling to have peace in Christ, and they came back with a burden of bringing peace to their church.

That is why the main emphasis in the books they write and in the sermons that they preach, most of them are trying to give our people peace, through Justification by faith. But the devil is very clever. He's quite happy to move the people of this church from legalism, which is one camp, one counterfeit, to the other extreme, antinomianism, the opposite camp. He doesn't care which camp you belong to. And that is what he has done.

The result is that, today, the movement of our younger generation is no longer legalism, it is antinomianism. These old people look at these young people and say, "Oh, what's happening to our church!?" So we write books — Creeping Compromise and others.

Now which camp is worse? The first camp, legalism, is worse, in a sense, because, outwardly, legalism ALWAYS looks good. Your performance is always good in legalism. The problem with legalism is inward, inside, not outward. So Jesus,

when He condemned the Pharisees, do you know what He called them? Matthew 23:27:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.

That is Christ's evaluation of legalism.

Antinomianism has one advantage: it is open, and you can see it, and, therefore, there is hope of correcting it. So, outwardly, antinomianism looks worse than legalism; but they both belong to Satan.

What we want is the truth as it is in Christ. Neither legalism nor antinomianism belong to the true gospel. Here Paul is dealing with antinomianism. Let's quickly go step-by-step, and you will see the logic; it's very clear. Romans 6:1:

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning [notice the present continuous tense] so

that grace may increase?

He's referring to Romans 5:20:

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.

“Is this what I am telling you,” he says in Romans 6:1, “is this what I'm teaching, that you can enjoy sin because the more you sin the more grace will cover up your sin?” I want you to notice his answer [Romans 6:2]:

By no means!

“God forbid! Certainly not! It is unthinkable that a Christian should come to such a conclusion.” Then he gives the reason. The reason is not based on our promises to be good, but it is based in the truth as it is in Christ to which we have submitted [rest of Romans 6:2]

...We died to sin; how can we live in it any

longer?

When did you and I die to sin? That phrase, “died to sin,” appears three times in Romans 6:1-13. This is the first time and applies to the believer. The second time it appears in verse 10 and does not apply to the believer; it applies to Christ, because our subjective experience is always based on an objective truth: the historical Christ. Look at Romans 6:10:

The death he [Christ] died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In other words, when Christ died on the cross, He brought sin to an end. He did not only die or carry or bear our acts of sin which condemn us, but He also brought to an end sin as a principle that dwells in us. He took sin to the grave and He left it there, not for three days but forever. He left sin in the grave, once and for all; He’s finished with sin. So the book of Hebrews says, when He comes the second time, He will not deal with the sin problem; He has dealt with that on the cross, left it in the

grave. He died once and for all; He will not die any more. That's what Romans 6:9 says:

For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him [because sin no longer has dominion over Him].

He took our sins, it had dominion over Him. He took our sins, it took Him to the grave. But when He rose from the dead, He left sin in the grave forever. So the second half of Romans 6:10 says:

...but the life he lives, he lives to God.

Which means now He will never, ever have to experience God abandonment which our sins produced on the cross. But now look at Romans 6:11:

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

In other words, a Christian is a person who has accepted his identity with Christ. Two thousand years ago, God joined His Son to us so that, in Christ, He redeemed us. Now, in baptism, we join ourselves by public confession, through faith, to Him, so that it is now reciprocal. He joined to us and redeemed us; we join to Him and accept His history as our history.

What does that mean in terms of practical Christianity? I want you to look at two verses. We will not deal with verses 3 and 6 because we covered that in our last study on the meaning of baptism. But I want now to look at it in the context of what we are studying. Look at verse 5 and look at verse 8, and what I want you to look at is the grammar. Romans 6:5:

If we have been united with him like this in his death,...

“Have been united.” What tense is that? “Have been united” is in the perfect tense, which means it’s a past act, something that has already

happened because, when you were baptized, it became a historical fact to you. But when it comes to the resurrection, suddenly [end of Romans 6:5]:

...we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

You have the past tense for death; you have the future tense for the resurrection. So God is not saying, “One day you will die to sin.” No, you have already died to sin. Yes, one day you will rise and go to heaven; that’s future. Look at verse 8, in the aorist tense, which is much stronger, something that happened once and for all [Romans 6:8]:

Now if we died with Christ [past], we believe that we will also live [future] with Him.

That’s the condition of the gospel, not of the law, but of the gospel. If you want to live with Christ, you must die with Him. And if you have died with Christ, it means that you have left sin in your grave, which is not a tomb but is the water which you were baptized into. You left sin in the

grave.

“How then,” says Paul, “if you have died to sin, and finished with that relationship, how then can you say it is okay to sin? Don’t you realize your baptism? You’re contradicting your righteousness by faith.” Look at Romans 6:7:

...Because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Now what did Paul mean, “Anyone who has died has been freed from sin”? Now first of all, look at it very carefully. He does not say, “He that has died has been freed TO sin.” He doesn’t say that. So don’t pervert Paul. You have been freed FROM sin, a world of difference.

But what does he mean by the word “freed”? If you look at Romans 6 you will find that the word “free” or “freed,” past tense, is used three times in Romans 6. The first time is in Romans 6:7:

...Because anyone who has died has been freed

from sin.

The second time is in verse 18:

You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Again, not “to sin” but “from sin.” The last time is in verse 22, which says:

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

But that is in your English Bibles. In the original, the word “free” used in verses 18 and 22 is a different word all together than the word used in verse 7. Now why did Paul change words? I’ll tell you why, because in verse 7 he has two meanings, whereas in verse 18 and verse 22 he has only one meaning of the word “freed.” Let me explain to you.

I want you to remember what I mentioned

when we did the review under the sin problem (Universal Sin and Guilt). Remember, I said that the conclusion that Paul comes to in Romans 3:9 is that we are all under sin. To be under sin means that we are ruled by sin, we are slaves of sin, sin is our master. How long is sin your master? As long as you are living. When you die, sin can no longer rule over you. That's the meaning of verse 18, verse 22, and also verse 7.

But Paul has another meaning in verse 7; that's why He uses another word. Do you know what word he uses in verse 7? It may surprise some of you. He uses the word "justified," the same word you will find in your King James in Acts 13:39. So Romans 6:7 says:

...Because anyone who has died has been justified from sin.

Now "justified" would mean more than simply freed from the ruling power of sin. It is also freed from the condemnation of sin. A justified person can never be condemned by the law, because the

law only condemns the sinner, whereas in Christ you are not a sinner.

Now let me explain how Paul uses it. It's very important that you understand it. Let us say that I have stolen \$10,000, and I'm caught. I'm taken to court and I'm found guilty, and the judge sentences me to five years in prison. I go to the penitentiary and I spend my five years there. When I come out, where do I stand legally? Am I still condemned for that robbery or am I acquitted (which is another word for "justified")? The answer is: I am acquitted. No longer can a policeman touch me for that crime; not because I did not steal that money, but because I paid the price for that crime. I took the sentence which that crime involved. Now the law of God says [Ezekiel 18:20]:

The soul who sins is the one who will die.

When you died to sin with Christ, you were set free from under the law. Romans 7:1 says:

Do you not know, brothers — for I am

speaking to men who know the law — that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives?

But the moment you die, the law says, “You have met the justice of the law; I won’t touch you any more.”

So you are free legally, also, when you die with Christ. So you have two freedoms:

1. You have been freed from the rulership, from the power of sin. That doesn’t mean that sin’s power is not in you, but legally, through the cross of Christ, it no longer has a claim on you. So when the flesh, when the law of sin tempts you and says, “Why don’t you sin?” you can tell the law of sin, “Look, you are no longer my boss! I’m finished with you forever!”
2. And you have a right to do that, because, when you died with Christ you were freed from the dominion of sin. But that doesn’t mean that you do not fall.

And now I come to a very important point, and I want you to be clear on this. Paul is not dealing in Romans 6 with performance; he is dealing with attitude towards sin. I want you to keep this in mind. Paul is not dealing with performance, he's dealing with attitude. I'll tell you why.

You may have said good-bye to sin in your heart, but does that mean that you don't fall? Does it mean that you don't have struggles? If I said, "You have no more struggles," I would be lying to you. You know very well that you are still struggling and that you still fall. But a Christian's performance must never be because he condones sin. In other words, our attitude towards sin must always be negative, even though in performance we fall many times.

Now, I want you to be clear: God can give you total victory. I believe that with all my heart because I believe that God's power is greater than the power of sin. (We'll come to that when we cover Romans 8.) But I want you to be clear that

Paul is not dealing here with performance. He's dealing here with attitude towards sin. Can a Christian say in his mind, "It's okay to sin"? The answer is, "No!"

Why? Because you died to it. There is another reason, but that is for the study after next. But the reason we are looking at today is, "How can you who died to sin say that it is okay to sin?" So please remember, Paul is dealing here with attitudes, not performance.

Okay, with this in mind, let's go to Romans 6:11:

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

"A Christian should consider himself dead to sin." If you consider yourself dead to sin, you cannot say, "It is okay to sin." That would be a contradiction. How can you say, "I'm dead to sin" on one hand and on the other hand say, "It's okay to sin." Then please, you need to look up your

dictionary and see what it means “to be dead” to something. It means to completely bring to an end that relationship. When a person dies, he says good-bye to life; when you say “died to sin” you say good-bye to sin. But now look at Romans 6:12:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

“Therefore, because you have died to sin, because you have accepted your death to sin in Christ, and you are alive now only to God, Who is the Author of Righteousness and not sin (and this is all “in Christ”), therefore do not let sin rule or reign over you.”

You see, before you accepted Christ, sin ruled over you; you had no choice there. There is no such thing as a free man when we talk in the spiritual realm. Yes, a country can be economically free, it can be politically free. We can be free, we are living in a free country. I can speak what I like about the President. I dare not do

that in some parts of the world. I have freedom of speech here; I have political freedom. And, of course, this country is free economically.

But spiritually, none of us are free from sin by birth. We are born under the law, under sin, too. But when you accepted Christ and you died with Him, you were freed from the dominion, the rulership of sin. Yes, it is still in you, because you died by faith, not by reality. Only Christ died in reality. But you don't have to now listen to sin's demands.

The other day, I was talking to a person whose ex-husband was demanding something from her. She said to me, "Do I have to obey him?"

I asked, "Are you divorced?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Then," I said, "you don't have to obey him. You're free. It's too bad you had to get a divorce but you don't have to obey him. He no longer has

authority over you.”

It’s the same with sin. Sin has no more dominion over you, in Christ. You are free. So Paul says, “Enjoy and apply that freedom.”

So when sin comes to you and says, “I want you to sin,” you can say to the law of sin, “Go get lost! You’re no longer my husband; you’re no longer my boss.” Romans 6:12:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

“So don’t let sin rule your mortal body that you should obey it in its lusts (which you did before your conversion).” Romans 6:13:

Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God [remember, you’re alive to God now], as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

It is not our bodies that are sinful. We have a driver who is sinful. Have you seen some reckless driving? The problem is not the car, the problem is the driver. The old driver has died, and that's in verse 6. So when Paul says:

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin....

Some translations say “our old man” was crucified. He does not mean your father, young people. It means your old life. Because in England, and in English countries, the kids call their father “the old man.” Paul is not talking about the old man in terms of your father. It means your old life that you were born with died on the cross. When that happened, the body was deprived of its power to sin. No longer should sin rule over you.

Can you imagine what would happen if a

church would surrender to this truth? We wouldn't have to worry about legalism, and we would not have to worry about "creeping compromises" either. Because the gospel is neither of the two. It is neither legalism, nor antinomianism.

It my prayer that you will remind yourself daily who you are in Christ, that you are dead to sin. No longer has it authority to rule over you. But you are not only dead to sin, but you are alive to God. Let God's Spirit now control you. Let God's Spirit give you the power (we will see this more in chapter 8). But Paul wants you to know who we are as Christians. We are dead to sin, and alive to God, and baptism was a public confession that we have accepted this dual truth, in Christ: dead to sin and alive to God.

So my prayer is, let sin no longer rule over you. You don't have to be a slave to sin any more. We have been freed from its dominion. Let God be your boss. I'll tell you, there is not anything so wonderful as to have God as your boss, because He is a benevolent, loving Father Who loves you

eternally, and Who will give you everything that He knows is best for you, not what you know, but what He knows, and He knows more than us. So may God bless us that you will know this truth, you will apply it, and there will be a reformation and a transformation in this church. Because the cross of Christ is the power of God unto salvation. May God bless you.

Next I'm going to deal with only two verses: 14 and 15. Read these. What did Paul mean when He says, "We are no longer under the law, but under grace"? I want you to wrestle with that. What did he mean? Did he mean just the ceremonial law? Does it include the moral law? What does it mean? We'll wrestle with that next, and may God bless us.

Chapter 16

Not Under Law – Under Grace

(Romans 6:14, 15)

I was at a conference and, during a short break, I ran up to Pastor Eva and whispered, “Look, I have a concern. I won’t be there [at the next Adventist Annual Conference] to bring it up but I would like to share it with you since you are the chairman [of the Church Manual Committee].”

We went into my office and I pulled down the Church Manual and I shared with him my concern. It was Baptismal Vow #6. Do you remember your baptismal vows? I copied it from my old Church Manual and I’m going to read what it says to you, and then I’ll tell you what I had explained to him as my concern. This is how it goes, and I’m reading it verbatim:

“Do you accept the 10 commandments as still binding upon Christians, and is it your purpose by

the power of the indwelling Christ to keep this law including the fourth commandment which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord?”

Now the thing that bothered me were those two words, “still binding.” I said to Brother Eva, “This is a contradiction of Romans 6:14, because the impression we are giving in this vow is that a Christian is still under the law. He was under the law before, but it’s still binding on him, therefore, he’s still under the law after he becomes a Christian. Paul tells us that we are no longer under the law.”

He looked at me and said, “You know, you have a point there.” He took down notes furiously; I gave him some arguments, some other passages also in the Bible. I want to read now what appears in our modern baptismal vow, and I’m glad for the change:

“Loving the Lord with all my heart, it is my purpose, by the power of the indwelling Christ of

God, to keep the 10 commandments, including the fourth commandment which requires the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord.”

There is a world of difference between those two statements. But I’ve been in this country seven years now, and I am convinced that the changing of the baptismal vow hasn’t solved the problem. I would say that the majority of Adventists still feel that they are “under the law.” I realize that this is a difficult area, but we have to face it honestly. We have to ask ourselves, “Paul, what did you mean when you said that we Christians are no longer under the law, but under grace?”

Now I know why the vow was introduced. We were trying to counteract the teaching of dispensationalism, which was something that was introduced to the Christian church about the same time our church was established, in the 19th century, by a scholar by the name of John Nelson Darby. This is what he taught, and this is what the

Christian church has accepted to a large degree, a very strong idea still today.

The idea was that God used the law as a means of salvation from Moses to Christ; in other words, our salvation was based on our relationship to the law from Moses to Christ. That is the “Old Covenant” dispensation.

Then Christ came along and He did away with the Old Covenant, which means He did away with the law, and replaced it with grace, so that since Christ we are under grace and not under law. Therefore, anyone who teaches that the law is still binding is still under the Old Covenant. And that’s one of the accusations that comes to us.

It is true that no way does the Bible teach the concept of dispensationalism. In other words, God doesn’t have different methods of saving men in different periods of earth’s history. There is only one way that God saves man ever since the fall of Adam, and that is by grace alone. Paul made that clear in Romans 4. Abraham was saved not by

works, not by circumcision, not by law, but by faith in the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

But as I mentioned to Brother Eva, two wrongs don't make a right. In trying to counteract dispensational teaching, we went to the other extreme, which is legalism, which is just as bad as antinomianism. So we have to come to grips with what did Paul mean when he says we are not under the law. First of all, let us look at what he did not mean:

1. He did not mean that the law was done away with in order to replace it with grace.

He did not mean that; nowhere in the Bible does he teach that. Neither does he mean that grace and law are antagonistic. Let me put it this way: Who is the Author of the law? God. Who is the Author of grace? God. If grace and law are antagonistic then God is against Himself, and we have a problem.

2. The second thing that we need to know is that the definition of righteousness is the law, whether we take it in the context of the Old Covenant or the context of the New Covenant. There are no two definitions of righteousness. The measuring stick of righteousness is the law, period. Therefore, the law refers to both covenants.

The difference is this: that in the Old Covenant man was to fulfill that law in order to be saved. In the New Covenant, God fulfills the law to save us. That's the difference. The difference is not one has the law and one doesn't have the law. Paul does not mean that when He delivers us from under law and puts us under grace He did away with the law or that grace has nothing to do with law. We shall see that grace and law are compatible.

Now when we come to Romans 7, where Paul spends a whole chapter on this issue — because it's not a problem that exists only today, it was a

problem that existed in his day — he will tell us how and why we were delivered from under the law. We are not finished with this study; wait till we come to Romans 7, where Paul will go on into more detail. But we need to look at the facts. What are the facts when he says, “We are no longer under law but under grace”?

As I mentioned, grace and law are not antagonistic. In fact, when Paul talks to the Christian in terms of Christian living, he uses the law as the measuring stick of righteousness.

Let me give you two examples. (I can give you one from Romans 13 but I’ll leave that till we come to Romans 13.) But look at Galatians 5:13,14. Now, to understand that, let’s look at verse 1 to get the background. Paul says in Galatians 5:1:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Now Paul tells us that Jesus set us free. Free from what? What is he referring to when he says we are free? What does he mean by the yoke of bondage [or slavery]? Well, he explains this to us in Galatians 4:4,5, so we need to go backwards still so that we can understand what it is he set us free from:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Christ came here under the law. Why? To redeem those who were under the law. God set us free from under the law through Christ. Romans 6:14:

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

In Romans 6:14, he's simply stating the fact that we are no longer under the law. Why? Because Christ freed us from under the law. He'll

explain how and why in chapter 7 of Romans.

But now, in chapter 5 of Galatians, he's telling the Galatians — who had given up the gospel of righteousness by faith and had gone back to under law — he's saying to them, “Please, you stand fast under the umbrella of grace. Don't go back to under law, because it's the yoke of bondage.”

Does it sound like Paul is against the law? Yes, maybe. But what he's against is not the law, he's against legalism: that is the yoke of bondage. I'll explain why in a moment. But look at Galatians 5, verses 13 and 14 now with this in mind:

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

“You, my brothers” or, as some translations read, “brethren,” is referring to Christians. We have been called to be free in the sense we are no

longer under the law.

And, Paul is saying, don't misuse your freedom from under law. "In fact," he says, "you must love one another." "In fact," he goes on to say in verse 14, "when you love one another, you are obeying the law."

So Paul is not against the law as a standard of Christian living. But what does he mean by, "You are free from under the law"?

I want to remind you of our study of the "sin problem," which began in Romans 1:18 right up to Romans 3:20. I want you to notice the conclusions that Paul came to, two of them:

1. Number one is found in Romans 3:9, and that is: "All of us, Jews and Gentiles, with no exception, are all under sin."
2. And number 2, Romans 3:19, "Jew and Gentiles are all also under law."

When you put those two together, you have an awful picture. The whole world is guilty when you put those together. Let me explain to you. Turn to 1 Corinthians 15. Why is it so terrible to be under sin and to be under law at the same time? Here it is: 1 Corinthians 15:56:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

Sin kills, folks. But sin cannot kill by itself; it needs to get power to kill you. When you put sin and law together, the end result is death. That's the problem. It was no problem for Adam, before the fall, to be under law. It is no problem today for the unfallen angels to be under law. It is a problem for you and me to be under law, because we are sinners, and a sinner who is under law is a person who is condemned.

Did Christ deliver me only from under sin? No. Because even though you have accepted Christ, even though you have been freed from sin as we saw in our last study, don't you commit sins?

Or are you sinless? If you are committing sin, then, if you are under law, the law will condemn you, every time you fall.

That is a result that has happened in our church. Our people are full of guilt. Many have no peace, you have no assurance, because every time you fall “you’ve had it.” Then you have to go on your knees and say, “God, please forgive me, I did not mean what I did.” When all the time you did mean what you did. I don’t know who you’re trying to kid. God can read your motives; He knows your flesh loves sin, including this rascal’s flesh. So please don’t bluff God. You can bluff your Pastor, and your spouse, and your friends, but you can’t bluff God. God knows that. So He delivered us from under law that we might have peace.

Is that good news? Yes, but it is dangerous news. That’s the context of Romans 6. “Sin cannot touch you, sin cannot destroy you,” that’s what Paul is saying, “because you are not under law, you’re under grace.”

Let me give you a little experience. In 1975, when we were on furlough from Ethiopia, we were at Andrews University, and my wife has a sister in Toronto [Canada] so we went to visit her. Of course, the cheapest car we could buy, like it is today, were those big cars, with eight cylinders that drink all the gas, but you can buy it cheap.

So I had this V8 engine under my hood. But I had a terrible problem. The American government had passed a law: 55 miles per hour — “double nickels” — that’s no speed for a V8 engine. And I had two backseat drivers: my son and my daughter, especially my daughter. Every time that needle passed 55, she told me in no uncertain terms that I was under law, that if I did not slow down, the police would get me.

She was amazed, as I was, that in America they don’t catch you speeding by coming and driving along side you. They have a little gun, called radar, that tells them your speed, and they hide in corners where you don’t see them. My daughter knew that; she said, “This is America, this is not

Africa where they chase you.” [In Africa,] when you have a faster car, or a faster motorcycle, they have a hard time to give you tickets. That was the freedom we had in Africa.

But we crossed the border, and we were in Canada. In Canada, the roads look very much like America’s. What she did not notice, but what I noticed, was that the speed limit in Canada was 75 miles per hour. Now I was free, no longer under “double nickels.” So that needle went up, to 65, to 70. And my daughter’s heart rate went up, and up, and up. She kept screaming at me, and then she looked back and what do you think she saw? A police car, with the lights flashing, coming towards us. I was doing 70 m.p.h., and she thought that the police were coming for me. Now I did not know what he was coming for. I thought for a moment maybe I had done something wrong. But I kept to 70, and she said, “Look, he’ll get you!”

I said, “All he can do is put me in jail.”

And she said, “Who will drive?” I was the only

driver in that car. You can see why my kids suffer. Anyway, the car came, it passed us, and she sighed in relief and said, “Daddy, you are lucky.” No, I wasn’t lucky. I was no longer under “double nickels.” I was free. He couldn’t touch me for speeding because I was not speeding in Canada.

I would be taking advantage if I went over 75. I was free, but I was not free to go any speed I wanted. Under grace you’re free, but you are not free to do what you like.

To be freed from under law is wonderful news. You can sleep tonight, not having to worry whether you will make it or not. BUT, it’s dangerous. Look at Romans 6:15. You will notice Paul is repeating the same question that he does in verse 1, except in verse 1 he’s dealing with the other dangerous statement which we covered in Romans 5:20:

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.

The only reason why he's asking the question in Romans 6:15 is because to be free from under law is dangerous for sinful mankind because they can pervert it. Romans 6:15:

What then? Shall we sin [using the present continuous tense, "Let us enjoy sin"] because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

"Is this what it means to be free from under the law, that we can sin, do what we like?" And the answer is "God forbid!" or "By no means!" (Now he'll give a good reason after having made this statement, but that is our next study, verses 16-23.)

But now I want to tell you about the good news. But I want to warn you that, after you hear the good news, if you go out and tell your friends, "Isn't it wonderful that we are no longer under the law? Therefore we don't need to keep it," I will come after you, because I am not teaching that. Is that clear?

Paul is not giving us this freedom; neither is your Pastor giving you that freedom. But it is important for us to know that we are free from under the law. I'll tell you why. Because God is not concerned with your performance, He's concerned with your motive, or why you do what you do.

If you are doing the right thing out of fear of punishment or out of a desire for reward, that is not Christianity, that is Paganism. That is why we need to understand that Christians serve God for a different reason than the Pagans serve their gods. Otherwise, Christianity is no different from other religions. They have very high moral standards too, sometimes higher than ours. But the difference is that a Christian serves God with appreciation, with joy, with peace, with love.

Now what does it mean, what are the privileges to be under grace? First of all, as I mentioned, grace is not antagonistic to law. Secondly, grace has not done away with the law. We are not under the Old Covenant, but that doesn't mean that law

has been done away with. I gave you Galatians 5:13,14; now let me give you Hebrews 8:10:

This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

What does God do in the New Covenant? He takes the same law that He freed you from under, but He doesn't put you back under it, but He puts it where? Where does God put that law? Not on tables of stone to put fear into you, but He puts it in our hearts. He makes it part of our desires, and that's where He puts it.

Now, what does it mean to be under grace? Let me give you some of the privileges, or some of the advantages. To be under grace, and not under law, means that every time you fall, you do not become unjustified. Is that good news? Yes. But as I mentioned, that does not give you the liberty to do what you like. Is that clear? When you sin under

law, who get's punished? Does the law say to you, "Well, I love you, and I know you disobeyed me, but, because I love you, I will take the punishment."

The answer is no. The law will never sympathize with you, and the law will never take your punishment. The law will only execute punishment on you. In other words, under law, who suffers when the person sins? The sinner or the law? The sinner. That's our problem.

Does grace ignore sin? No. Does grace excuse sin? No. Is grace righteous? Yes. Is grace just? Yes. Therefore, it can't ignore sin. But the difference is that, under grace, who suffers, the sinner or the Author of grace, Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ.

Let me explain it, and the way that I'll explain it is basically in terms of the statement we read in Galatians 4:4:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his

Son, born of a woman, born under law....

When God sent His Son, He sent His Son under law. Suppose I have a tithe envelope here, which I hold over my head. Let us say that this is the law; it's above me. I was born under the law, you were born under the law, because in Adam all men were placed under the law. Now what did Christ do? Did He do away with the law? No. What did God do? He sent His Son under the law. So Christ came under the law, and I, I am no longer under the law, I'm under Christ, or I'm under grace.

So Christ has taken my place under the law. If I had a choice of myself being under the law, or Christ being under the law in my place, which one would I prefer? Well, I know that I'm a failure, but I do know one thing: that Christ obeyed the law perfectly. And my position in Him does not condemn me because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Is it because Christ did away with the law? No, He did not do away with the law, but He fulfilled the law. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe.

So if the law says to me, “You’re a sinner; you must die!” I will say to the law, “But I already died, in Christ.”

Or, if the law says to me, “You must obey me to live,” I will not say to the law, “I’m trying.” I will say, “In Christ, I have already obeyed you.” Because under grace I have righteousness. The righteousness that the law demands from me I already have, in Jesus Christ. That’s good news. I have peace, I have assurance.

Now I gave you Galatians 5:13,14: “Do we allow this freedom to lead a licentious life?” And the answer is “No.” Let me give you another text, this time not from Paul but from Peter. Turn to 1 Peter 2:13-16:

Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is

God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men....

What does he mean by living as "free" people? We are not doing good because we will be punished or to get a reward. We are free from that anxiety. Christians don't do good or try to keep the law because they want to escape punishment. They are free from that problem. But then why do we do good? 1 Peter 2:16:

Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God.

Paul will expand on this Himself when we come to our next study, Romans 6:16-23. We are servants of God, of Jesus Christ, and Christ is the Author of righteousness, not sin.

Please remember that sin has results. Under the law, sin punishes the sinner. Under grace, sin punishes the Author of grace. In other words, to sin under grace does not mean condemnation, but

to sin under grace is saying it is okay for Christ to be crucified. Sin to a Christian is not breaking a commandment; sin is putting a knife into Christ. Because that is what the Old Testament taught the believer about sin. In the Old Testament, when the believer sinned, he brought a Lamb to the sanctuary and what did the priest do? The priest gave him a knife. What did he do with the knife, kill himself? No. What did he kill? The lamb, confessing that, "My sins killed you." How then can you treat sin lightly under grace? Sinning under grace is putting a knife into Christ. We must hate sin for what it is and what it does to our Savior.

But I want to bring a third privilege of being under grace, and that is this: under the law, when you did good or when you tried to keep the law, you did it for two reasons: out of fear of punishment or out of a desire for reward. That is what we normally do when we are under law.

Let me give you an example. Yesterday I sent a big fat check to a place called IRS [Internal

Revenue Service, to which U.S. citizens pay taxes]. I'll tell you honestly, I did not do this out of joy, or because I love to do it. If I had my own way, I would not send a single penny, especially the way they spend their money in this country for things that I don't agree with.

But when I pay my tithe, I don't pay for the same reason I pay my taxes. I pay my tithe for one reason, I pay my taxes for another reason. I pay my taxes because I'm under the law while I live in America. I discovered that an American who travels abroad is still under the law of America as far as the taxes are concerned. I learned it the hard way.

During my years in the mission field, I did not send any tax return. I said, "Well, I'm living in Ethiopia." When I came here, they caught me and said, "Why haven't you paid tax? Why didn't you send a return?"

I said, "Nobody told me; I was living in a foreign country."

“That doesn’t matter,” they said. “You’re going to pay a six percent fine for all that you owe.”

So I had to bring my papers, and they calculated, and you know how much I owed? Zero. Because six percent of zero is zero. I said, “I’ll be happy to pay that.” Because I wasn’t earning enough to pay a single cent [in taxes] in the mission field. Thank God for that part, at least. I could do with more money, but that’s a different story.

But why are you trying to obey God’s law? Is it the same reason that you have to pay your tax? Then you haven’t understood the gospel. When I look at the law, I do not look upon it as dos and don’ts: “You better obey me or else!” That no longer applies to me, because I am no longer under the law. But when I look at the law, I look at the character of my Savior, and I say, “This is how I want to be.”

But I want to give you one more privilege under grace. Grace doesn't only free you from condemnation, grace doesn't only free you from the curse, but grace, as we saw when we did Romans 5:2, is also a POWER that makes it possible for you to keep the law. "I am what I am by the grace of God," says Paul to the Corinthians. "And the grace that was given to me was not in vain, I labored more than you all [the apostles]."

Grace is a power that can give you victory over sin and produce in you the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is grace, and that is the privilege that we have as Christians. So it is a wonderful thing to be under grace: no more condemnation, no more insecurity. There is peace, there is assurance, but there is also power under grace.

I want to conclude with the danger of saying good-bye to grace. Let me put it this way: as long as you are living under the umbrella of grace there can be no condemnation, sin has no more dominion over you, sin can't execute you. You know why? Because sin can execute you only when it gets

power from the law. But you are no longer under the law. Therefore, sin can't touch you in terms of the wages of sin. Sin can hurt you, yes, but sin can't touch you. Because, under grace, it is not the sinner who suffers, but Christ. And it is only when you have understood this that you can understand the words of David. You know what David said about those terrible things he did with Bathsheba and her husband? You know how he prayed? He said [Psalm 51:4]:

Against you [God], you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight....

What did he mean? Didn't he hurt Bathsheba? Didn't he hurt her husband? Her husband died because of what David did. But what David did to those two did not deprive them of heaven, do you know that? But what David did to Christ was put Him on the cross for his sins. And David realized that the real person that he hurt when he sinned was not Bathsheba, was not her husband, but was a Savior. Therefore, he said [Psalm 51:10]:

Create in me a pure heart, O God....

When Joseph was tempted [by Potiphar's wife] he did not say, "I better not do this because I'll be punished." He said [Genesis 39:9]:

How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?

That's how our attitude should be towards sin.

As long as you are living under grace, you are free from condemnation, you are free from the curse, because sin can't touch you, because you are no longer under the law. But please remember that the day you say good-bye to that umbrella of grace, which is possible, you are finished. How do you say good-bye to grace? Not by falling, but by deliberately, willfully, persistently saying, "I don't want Christ any more."

There are three ways that the devil will try and get you to say good-bye to grace. So one of the greatest burdens of the devil is to get Christians out

of grace. I want to expose you to the three ways. I'll give you one text for each of them.

1. The first way is the worst way, in the sense that it is the way that he has been most successful in the lives of many Christians, including our own church. That way is by perverting the gospel. What do I mean by perverting the gospel? Read the book of Galatians. What was the problem with the Galatians? Look at Galatians 1:6-7:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Some men had come and perverted the gospel of Jesus Christ. What was the perversion, found in chapter 3? “You were perfect in Christ, through the Spirit. Now you’re trying to improve your perfection by works, by circumcision, by keeping the law.” In other words, perverting the gospel is

making salvation partly of Christ and partly of you. That's what happened to the Galatian Christians.

I mentioned before that grace and law are not antagonistic; they are in the same camp. BUT grace and sin are never partners. Grace and sin are antagonistic. Therefore, if you try and save yourself by your performance, you are not saving yourself by grace, you are saving yourself by under law. To save yourself by lawkeeping and to save yourself by grace are not compatible; they can never be married together. So Paul says in Galatians 5:4, that's the text I'll give you for that one:

You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

In Christ we have righteousness full and complete, 100 percent. You can't add to that, you can't improve on that. The moment you try to improve on that you are saying good-bye to Christ, you're denying Him, you're rejecting Him. So one

way the devil will destroy your position under grace is to put you under legalism, and it is in this sense that Paul says to the Galatians, “Please don’t give up your freedom in Christ and go back to the yoke of bondage.” That’s Galatians 5:1:

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

In verse 4, “If you use the law as a means of salvation, you’ve fallen from grace.”

2. The second method that Satan uses is by dangling the trinkets of this world in front of your eyes so that the things of this world become more attractive than the things of heaven. Because being a Christian does involve some hardships, because [being in] heaven is still in the future; we’re living now in enemy territory. So he will dangle the trinkets, and he gets the young people mostly in this. “Look man, the grass is green there in the world.”

The prodigal son is an example. He says, “I’m tired of living under my father.” He discovered later on that living under his father was ten times better than living under the world. So I’ll give you a text, 2 Timothy 4:10. Demas was a core evangelist with Paul. But what does Paul, in prison, say to Timothy? He says [2 Timothy 4:10]:

...For Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.

When he deserted Paul, Demas deserted what Paul stood for, the gospel, because Paul was in prison for the gospel. Tragedy.

3. Number three is future for most of us. The third way that Satan will destroy your position under grace is by persecution. He’ll make life so hell for you that you can’t bear it any longer and you say, “I give up,” and you go back to the world. And so Jesus said in Matthew 10:22, that’s the text:

All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

In other words, how did you come under grace? Grace belongs to God. The umbrella is for all people. But how did you come under it? By faith. How do you leave it? By unbelief. Unbelief is a deliberate rejection of Christ.

It is my prayer that you will never, ever say good-bye to your faith. As long as you are a believer, you are under the umbrella of grace and sin has no dominion over you, because you are no longer under the law. Therefore, sin no longer has the authority to execute you, because the law cannot give sin the authority to execute you when you're under grace. The law, by the way, has already executed you in Christ. (That is what we will cover in Romans 7.)

So may God bless us, that we may understand this wonderful privilege of being under grace. But, at the same time, let us not pervert this truth and use it as an excuse for sinning. May grace control you. May the grace of our Lord be the source of your peace but also the source of your Christian

living. It is my prayer that we will learn to enjoy the privilege of being under grace, and not under law. It is my prayer that this grace will be seen in the lives of each one of us. This is my prayer, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Chapter 17

Slaves of God

(Romans 6:16-23)

In the mission service, my colaborer in the ministerial department was a Black American by the name of Art Bushnel. We had many workshops together. We were in the Ministerial Department; we had workshops with the pastors. He had a favorite story, an illustration to show the relationship between the gospel and our acceptance of the gospel. Of course, he could tell this story with real conviction because the story had to do with a slave that was sold here in the south in this country before the Civil War days.

The slave happened to be a young, strapping, strong man. He was on the auction block and the auctioneer was trying to convince the crowd that, if they bought him, they would get tremendous work out of him, because he was strong, muscular. While he was giving this speech — you know, the

sales pitch — the slave opened his mouth and said, “I ain’t goin’ to work for nobody!”

The auctioneer turned round to this slave and said, “You keep quiet! You’re going to work whether you like it or not!”

The bidding went up and up, and a man at the back gave the highest bid, which was quite a high price, for this slave. Finally the bid went to him, and he came forward with the money, paid the auctioneer, and the auctioneer gave him the key that would unlock the shackles off the slave’s hands and feet. The man grabbed the chains that were holding the slave’s hands together, and said, “Come along.”

As this new owner dragged him through the crowd, this slave kept on muttering to him, “I ain’t goin’ to work for you!”

The new owner kept quiet; he didn’t say a word until they went some distance away from the crowd. Then he took the key and unlocked the

shackles off the slave's legs and hands, and then he spoke to the slave. He said, "Look, I did not buy you to get work out of you; I bought you that I might set you free."

The poor slave did not know how to handle that; he'd never experienced anything like that. For a few moments he was dumbfounded. Then, realizing what this man had done, he fell on his knees and said, "Master, as long as I live, I will serve you!"

Basically, that's the argument of Paul in this passage that we are covering. You must be aware of the fact that slavery was something that was practiced in the Roman world during Paul's time. In fact, some scholars tell us that anywhere between 40 to 60 percent of the population of the Roman empire were slaves. That's quite a high number. Slavery was quite common in Paul's day, so he can use this illustration to present a truth that he's trying to get across in terms of what it means to live under grace.

But before we look at the passage, I would like to remind you of the context of Romans 6. You need to keep this in mind, because what Paul is doing in chapter 6 is one of the dangers of the gospel. The dangers are twofold. The devil doesn't love the gospel, he hates the gospel, and there are two things he does within the Christian church. He does something else outside the Christian church to blind the eyes so that they don't accept the gospel. But within Christianity he has two counterfeits which we covered last time:

1. The first counterfeit is legalism, which, in many respects, resembles the gospel but is really a perversion of the gospel. In a nutshell, legalism simply means something that you experience subjectively, whether it's good works, or whether it's circumcision which the Judiazers were pushing in Paul's day, whether it's the keeping of the law, or even whether it is experiencing the gift of tongues. Anything subjective which you depend on, either to a small degree or to a larger degree for your salvation, that is

legalism.

The gospel is clear: it does produce fruits. But we must distinguish fruits of the gospel, which is holiness of living, which we will see in a moment, from legalism, which is living a holy life so that you may improve your standing before God or so that you may have salvation. Paul dealt with that problem in chapter 4, where he showed us clearly that our works, circumcision, and law-keeping in no way contribute towards our salvation.

2. Now in chapter 6 he's dealing with the other problem, and that is antinomianism, or libertinism, or cheap grace.

The gospel is that we are saved entirely as a free gift. It's entirely God's action in Christ that saves us. But, having a sinful nature, it is very easy for us to pervert that truth and say, "Since I'm no longer under the law but under grace, then why don't I keep on sinning? After all, the law can't condemn me! I'm under grace, no longer under

law.”

You see, the gospel is excellent good news, it's unconditional good news, but it is dangerous. The two dangerous statements that Paul is dealing with in Romans 6 are found in Romans 5:20, and Romans 6:14. In verse 20 he has made a statement:

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more....

In other words, you can pervert that to say, “Paul, the more I sin the more grace will forgive me, the more grace will save me. So praise the Lord, let us keep on sinning, that grace may abound all the more!”

Can you see that's a perversion? So Paul says, “Is this what I mean?” in verse 1 of chapter 6:

What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

And his answer is, “Unthinkable! Certainly not!” The King James Version reads, “God forbid!” Because a Christian is a person who has died to sin in Christ. “How can you who are dead to sin say it’s okay to sin? You’re contradicting your acceptance of the gospel.”

Then in Romans 6:14 he makes the other wonderful statement:

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

What he means here is that sin no longer has authority. It no longer has the legal right to condemn you, to execute you. Why? Because you’re no longer under law but under grace.

As we saw in the last study, in 1 Corinthians 15:56:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

Like the diplomats in the Third World, they have diplomatic immunity. An embassy person can break the speed limit in Kenya and the policeman can't touch him because he's no longer under the law of Kenya; he has diplomatic immunity. Well, a Christian has immunity from the condemnation of the law. The law can no longer say to you if you sin, "If you fall you must die!" Now is that good news? Yes! But is it dangerous? It sure is. So Paul is asking that question in Romans 6:15:

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?

Notice that this is the same question as verse one except from a different approach. "Does this freedom under grace give us the license to enjoy sin?"

What is his answer? The same answer as in verse 2 of chapter 6:

By no means!

“Certainly not! It is unthinkable! God forbid!”

Then he begins in verse 16-23, which is our passage for this study, to illustrate, using the slave society, or the slavery practice, to tell us that this attitude is a contradiction of the gospel. He knows Christians struggle, and we will see that in chapter 7, but he’s dealing with attitudes towards sin.

Let’s begin with Romans 6:16. A Christian must know two things:

1. He must know that when he was baptized into Christ he died to sin. That’s in Romans 6:3:

Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

The death he died, he died to sin once for all... [verse 10].

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus [verse 11].

2. The second thing that we must know is [Romans 6:16]:

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

The first thing that I would like to bring out here as we look at verse 16 is something that is very hard for us Americans to grasp. Because, to an American, freedom is everything. You fought for the freedom, that is, our forefathers did. Freedom is everything. I remember when I was in Idaho, the state was trying to pass a law. It was during the time when a man killed a policeman, and they were trying to pass a law where they would remove the freedom for the American living

in Idaho to carry firearms. What a noise! The people rose up in anger: “You are depriving us of our freedom!”

It is wonderful to have political freedom. It is wonderful to have economic freedom. But let us be very clear: when we talk in the realm of spirituality, in terms of spiritual realms, there is no such thing as freedom. You’re either a slave of sin, and the Devil, who’s the author of sin, or you’re a slave of God, the Author of righteousness. There is no such thing as independence in the spiritual realm. We need to face that.

But, as you look at the passage, you will notice that slavery under sin is our natural inheritance. In other words, if there was no gospel, we would have no choice, we would all be born slaves to sin, as we are today, but we would have no choice. But, because of the gospel, you have a choice as to which of the two will be your master.

Now I want to make this clear because we will come to Romans 7 where Paul will make this clear.

But I want to go to the words of Jesus Christ. But let me remind you when we come to Romans 7, which will be the next three studies, Paul makes it clear in Romans 7:14:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

It was when Adam fell that we were sold as slaves to sin.

You see, in a slave society, if a man was bought as a slave, and then he had children after he was bought as a slave, his children were not born free. They were born slaves, too. In other words, the master owned not only his slave, he owned his slave's wife, he owned his clothing, he owned his house, he owned his family, his kids, everything. That is what slavery is all about; you own nothing! And sin is our master, by inheritance.

With this in mind, turn to John 8. You see, the Jews had lost the truth of this. They failed to understand what the Reformers called “total

depravity.” They applied it to the Gentiles: “Yes, these Gentiles are under sin, but not us.”

Remember, when we did Romans 3, Paul went through all the length of Romans 1:18 right up to Romans 3:20 to prove that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin (chapter 3:9), that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, all have sinned, all are under the law.

But now look at John 8. Here is Jesus trying to correct, to show the Jews that they need a Savior, that they, too, were slaves to sin. The statement is found in John 8:32. Jesus is talking to the Jews and He says in verse 32:

Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

What he meant by the word “truth” is found in verse 36. He meant Himself. John 8:36:

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

But you see, the Jews felt that Jesus was insulting them. So they responded in verse 33:

They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants [we are not Gentiles] and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

Listen to Jesus’ response, John 8:34:

Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”

Paul will prove this in Romans 7:14-25. He will say that even if you chose, apart from grace, to keep the law, if you chose to do good, you cannot do it. Your mind will be brought into captivity and it will make you do what you don’t want to do.

Now I don’t have to convince you, because I hope you all have experienced what I’m talking about. You have made resolutions, you have made promises; have you kept them?

So, young ladies, when a man says to you, “If you marry me I will love you for the rest of my days,” remember: unless he’s under grace, he may not be able to keep that promise. Some of you may have to learn the hard way. The same holds true for you men. So please, it is only by grace that we can be set free from the power, the slavery of sin. Let me go to another passage, and I’m concerned about this. But please remember what I’m saying: according to verse 16, we have no freedom in the spiritual realm. There are two masters in this world, Satan and Christ, sin and righteousness, and you and I are either a slave of one or the other. Turn to the second statement of Jesus Christ, Matthew 6, the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is trying to do the same thing, but now He’s preaching to His followers. Matthew 6:24, this is the statement, then He goes to prove and explain the statement in verse 25 to the end of that chapter:

No one can serve two masters....

There are two masters; nobody can serve both

the masters at the same time. I'll tell you why: because these masters belong to opposite camps.

...Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other....

And then he explains who the two masters are:

You cannot serve both God and Money.

If Paul or Jesus were here today, they probably would have said, "You can't serve God and materialism," or "You can't serve God and self," because at the heart of all materialistic problems is self. You can't be under God and still allow self, or sin, to dominate you. You have to choose your master. Then he goes on to explain this.

I am concerned about this. We had a board meeting at my former church once and we had a report from the treasurer which was very disheartening: only one-fourth of the families of that church were supporting the church budget.

You know what that means? It means that three-quarters of the members were having a problem.

I'll come to the problem in a moment. But I will say one thing: if you have chosen Christ as a Master — and this is what Christ is saying — if you have chosen Christ as your master you will not worry about what you will eat, what you will drink, or what you will wear. That's the person who's under Money [or "Mammon"]. Because you will seek the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness and God will supply all your needs.

But we'll come to that. Let's go back to Romans 6. Paul is saying there are two masters. Before the gospel came, there was only one master: sin. But now there are two masters. Yes, we are born under sin, that is our natural master. But because of the gospel, you have the choice, you have the freedom to choose your master. And Paul is saying in Romans 6:16:

Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to

the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

If you have chosen sin as your master then you will sin until sin takes you to the grave. But if you have chosen God as Master, if you have chosen Righteousness as Master, then you have said good-bye to sin. You can't have both as your masters.

Now I want you to look once again very carefully at the two masters: sin and righteousness. Why did Paul not use the word “faith”? Because one is obedience to sin and the other one is righteousness by faith. Why does he use the word “obedience?” It sounds too legalistic.

Let me explain. You see, for Paul, the word “faith” was more than a mental assent to truth. You know, we had a Brother and Sister who had a car accident recently, and one of the questions I asked him (his car was wrecked) was, “Was it insured?”

And he said, “Thank God! Both my car and the car of the boy who ran into us were insured.” He believed now that the insurance company would pay him back. That’s a mental assent to a truth. But to Paul, faith was more than that. It was obedience to the truth. I’m going to demonstrate this from Scripture, but I’ll stick to Romans. There are many passages I can give you from Paul, but I’ll stick to Romans. Turn to chapter one of Romans. In his very introduction, what does he do? First of all, he introduces himself.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God....

I want you to notice how he introduces himself. Does he say, “I, Paul, the great Apostle”? No. “I, Paul,” a what of Jesus Christ? If your Bible says servant, the Greek doesn’t say that. Paul used the word *doulos*, which is the word “slave.”

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus....

Right at the very introduction, he tells the

Roman Christians Whom he has chosen as his Master. And the moment he became a slave of Jesus Christ, he had to do what Christ told him to do. On the Damascus Road, that's where he made his choice. On the Damascus Road he said to the Lord: "Lord, what would you have me do? I'm your slave now. What do you want me to do?"

God said two things: "Number one, I want you to be my Apostle. Number two, I have chosen you to go to the Gentiles and preach the gospel." Paul was "set apart for the gospel of God."

Then in verse 2, and verse 3, and verse 4, he puts in a nutshell what he means by the word "gospel":

1. It is the promise of God (in the Old Testament the gospel was the promise of God);
2. This promise was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, Who became one of us in order to be our Savior; and

3. Who demonstrated that He was Divine and the Son of God by His holiness.

But now look at verse 5, the human response:

Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith.

Now the word "obedience" there is what we would call in Greek a genitive of apposition, which means it's a word describing faith. So, to Paul, faith is obedience. That is Paul's fundamental definition of faith. So when I go to chapter 6 of Romans and look at verse 17, listen to what he says:

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

The Roman Christians had obeyed the gospel.

He's reminding them of that fact. Therefore, if they have obeyed the gospel, they have said good-bye to their slavery to sin.

Now let me give you one more chapter in Romans. This is in chapter 10, where he uses the word "obedience" in the negative. He's dealing in chapter 10 with the Jews. He's telling his Jews, "I have deep concern for you, but you are lost. And the reason you are lost is not because you are bad, it is not because God did not keep his promise." It is not because God did not fulfill what He promised them; it is because of one reason. And that's in Romans 10:16:

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news....

"That's the reason why you are lost: you have not obeyed the gospel." But then he quotes Isaiah to defend himself; and I want you to notice the quotation. The quotation does not have the word "obey"; the quotation has the word "believe." Because, to Paul, "believe" and "obey" are

synonymous.

...For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” [Isaiah 53:1]

Now what does it mean “to obey the gospel”? What does it mean? Is it doing something? No. Obeying the gospel is surrendering yourself or your will to the truth as it is in Christ.

God comes to you through the gospel and says, “In my Son, you have died. You have to die, you’re a sinner. But in My Son you have died.”

Obeying the gospel is saying, “God, I accept the death of Christ as my death.” THAT is obeying the gospel! In the gospel you are told that you are alive to God, you have become a slave of God. Obeying the gospel is saying, “Now, Lord, I am your slave. Use me, do with me what you want.” That is obeying the gospel. It is the total surrender of yourself to Jesus Christ.

But you say, “I don’t want to be a slave!”

Well, if you reject that, you are a slave of Satan, and sin. You have no choice there. You may bluff yourself, “I am free.” If you are free, let me ask you one question, “Prove it!” Live for one day — I don’t ask you for one week — live for one day without sinning, in thought, word, and deed. If you can do it, please, let me know. You deserve a medal. But you deserve more than that, you deserve to live somewhere else, not on this earth. We’ll send you to Mars. Because this world is full of sinners. Only by the grace of God can we be what God wants us to be. Jesus said in John 15:5:

...Apart from me you can do nothing.

Never forget that.

Let’s go on. Paul is reminding the Christians in Rome and, through them to us: “Remember, a Christian is a person who is a slave of God, no longer of sin but of God and His righteousness.” And he says in Romans 6:17:

But thanks be to God that, though you used to

be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

“God be thanked. You were slaves of sin, then the gospel came to you, and what did you do? You did not reject the gospel, you surrendered to it, you obeyed it.” Verse 18:

You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

“And now, having been set free from sin, from its slavery, you became slaves of righteousness.”

But there is a difference between these two slaveries. Under sin, you have no choice. When you are a slave of sin, you do what sin tells you. As we deal with Romans 7, you will notice how Paul will explain that.

But, under Christ, God never uses compulsion. He doesn't say, “You better do righteousness or I will punish you.” Christ doesn't do that, because His slavery is the slavery of One Who is a loving

Master.

I want to give you an example. In the Old Testament, and even in Paul's day in Rome, there were two kinds of slaves. You see, if you were freed in Paul's day from slavery, that would not solve your problem. I'll tell you why. There was no social security in Paul's day, there was no welfare. You would starve to death sometimes.

So, there were two kinds of slavery. Slaves that were bought and were working under a dictator, like that auctioneer was telling the slave, "You will work whether you like it or not." That's one kind of slavery. The other kind of slavery is when you have the freedom to leave the person you work for but you have chosen to be his slave.

In the Old Testament, this was symbolized by a very interesting practice. God gave a law to the Jews: if you buy a slave you cannot own him more than seven years. After seven years, you must set him free. But freedom to that slave would mean a lot of problems. So, sometimes, especially when

the master was kind and loving and helpful and considerate, the slave would come to his master and say, “Look. I know my period of seven years is over, but I would like to be your slave for the rest of my life.”

Do you know what they did, ladies? They pierced the ears of the slave; that’s the only reason you need to have your ears pierced. Not to put some gold stuff on it or some shiny stuff, but to tell yourself you are a slave of Jesus Christ. They pierced the ears, and that was a sign that you are a slave by choice. Now that is the kind of slave that God wants you to be. That is why I want you to notice in verse 17:

...You wholeheartedly obeyed....

“You have obeyed from the heart.” It was no compulsion, God never forces. I’ll give you an example: the Jews in the Exodus. God fed them with manna. Now I don’t know if you know what manna tasted like, but the Bible tells us it was like wafer with a little touch of honey. It kind of

dissolved in your mouth. But can you imagine living on wafers breakfast, lunch, and supper, seven days a week for 40 years? No Sabbath dessert, all you had was manna. On Sabbath especially it was worse because it was leftovers. So here you were, you know, manna for breakfast, manna for lunch, manna for supper, and the Jews began to murmur, “God, we are tired of this manna, manna, manna. We are dying for Kentucky Fried Chicken.”

And God said, “You’ll have it, all you want.”

Do you know how much He gave them? [A layer in the camp] three feet high. Have you been swimming in Kentucky Fried Chicken, not 13 pieces in a bowl but three feet high of chicken. Well, it was pheasant, you know, or quail, which is a lot tastier than chicken, and a lot healthier, probably, because they didn’t pump them with all kinds of chemicals. They ate it until it came out of their ears. Now that’s a wonderful Hebrew expression. Who gave them those quails? God did. Was it His wish? No, they demanded it.

That's the kind of Master we have. And if you ask God, "I want to enjoy sin," He doesn't say, "You can enjoy sin but I will punish you." He says, "My dear child, sin will hurt you, and because it hurts you, it hurts me, because I love you."

So there is no compulsion. But God doesn't want any compulsive obedience. He wants obedience from the heart.

I want to give you another example. Turn your Bible to Acts 8. Do you know who was the first Gentile to be baptized in the Christian church, according to the records? We don't know whether he was the first in actual history but, as far as the Bible record is concerned, in terms of actual baptism, he is the first person, Gentile, to be baptized. Do you know who he was? The Ethiopian Eunuch. He was what they would call an "abba-sha." They call us "foranji." It isn't too bad a word. The word in Swahili is worse. They call us "pongo," which is a "white monkey." It's Afrikaans; it came from South Africa, but they have good reason you know. But the thing is this:

Here was this Ethiopian. He was in Jerusalem worshipping as a Jew, a converted Jew, he was struggling with the book of Isaiah, and God led Philip to him. And the Ethiopian asked Philip [Acts 8:34]:

Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?

Philip preached to him about Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And you know what the Ethiopian said [Acts 8:36]:

Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?

And Philip said, "No no no, one moment. I have to ask you 13 questions." He didn't do that. One question only. Here it is, verse 37:

Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

That's the question. And remember, belief is obedience. "If you obey from the heart, I'll baptize you."

The first time I was in Ethiopia they gave me a young evangelist to work under me. Within three weeks, I said to myself, "This man is not converted." He was an evangelist; that means he was an intern. (That's the word we use in Africa for interns. Here we use "pastors" and "elders"; there they use "evangelists" and "pastors.") So a Pastor there is an ordained minister, an evangelist is an intern. I don't know why they call it by these terms, but, anyway, that's how it is.

I said to myself, "This man needs to be converted first." He had all gold teeth; when he smiled, it sparkled. He was a good actor, would love to pat you on the back to get something out of you. I said, this man needs to know the message of the cross. So I spent some time and gave him the cross, and he said, "Boy, you're making it hard."

"No, Brother," I said, "it is only the cross that

sets us free.”

He said, “Can you give me a couple of days to think about it?”

“Okay, sure, you have to count the cost,” I said.

He came back two days later, smiling from ear to ear, “Brother Sequeira, I have accepted the cross!”

I said to myself, “It sounds to me like he is lying, but I can’t judge him.” I said, “Praise the Lord.” But I thought, “I will know you by your fruits.”

I discovered, three weeks later, that he was lying from beginning to end. Do you know what he was doing? He was working for two denominations at the same time: for us, and getting a salary, and for the Norwegian mission, and getting a salary. And he could do it, because we kept Sabbath, they kept Sunday, so he could go to church on Sabbath and be on the platform and

help me out. On Sunday he would go to the Norwegian mission. When I discovered that, I went to visit him. He didn't know that I was coming. You see, the lady in charge spoke Swedish, she was Swedish, and I speak Swedish, and so I spoke to her one day when I met her. And she said, "You know about _____?"

"Is this the same _____ that I know," I asked, "with gold teeth?"

"Yes," she said.

So I went to visit him. If he turned red in the face you couldn't see it because of his color. But I'll tell you, he sure was embarrassed. He lied.

I do not know whether you have obeyed the gospel from the heart. But when I look at three-fourths of the families not supporting a church in terms of budget, I am concerned. Because by the fruits I can tell that there is something wrong.

Folks, coming to church won't help you. And

I'll tell you, of our tithe, we don't keep one cent here. It goes all to the General Conference; that's the policy. But my concern is spiritual. If you have not obeyed, if you're still depending on yourself for support, if you're still depending on yourself for survival, **WHAT WILL YOU DO** when the crisis comes and when your faith will be tested?

It is my prayer that you will obey the gospel from the heart and no longer worry what you will eat and what you will drink. Let God take care of that. And if you have to starve to death, that's His problem, not yours. But your eternal security is sure, folks, when you are under Christ, because the chapter ends that way. But let's go on. Romans 6:19:

I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves....

Here I would like to say a few words to young budding theologians studying for the ministry. I wrestled with the first part of verse 19, "I speak in

human terms, because of the weakness of your flesh.” What is he talking about?

Well, when you go into the background, you discover that the public speakers of Paul’s day were experts at telling stories and using philosophy to get across to the people what they wanted. Paul is saying here, “I am behaving like one of them, giving you an illustration, a story about slaves, because you have difficulty understanding what I am trying to get across.” In other words, Paul is saying, “I’m not a story teller.” When he spoke to the Corinthians, he said [1 Corinthians 1:17]:

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel — not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

There are too many stories being told from the pulpit, and not enough preaching. The pulpit is for expounding the word of God. Paul is saying, “If I use illustrations, it is not to entertain you.”

And I dare not compete at entertaining in America. Because when I look at your videos, I have no chance to try to entertain you people. I have no way to entertain you the way the videos can. In this country, you have all the entertainment that you need. Like the Jews had quails, you have videos here until they are coming out of your ears. So I don't have to add to that. But I do know one thing, that Paul is saying, "I'm giving you this illustration, because that's not my pattern, but because you are having difficulty understanding this truth." And then he goes on, second half of Romans 6:19:

...Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

What is Paul saying here? That both slaveries have development. And once again, young people, I want to warn you that both slaveries have development. I remember a young man in college in Ethiopia said to me, "Pastor, what you are

teaching is the truth, but I want to enjoy this world, so, when I get to your age, I will accept Christ, but please don't ask me to do it now. I need to enjoy life.”

But what he failed to understand is this: that the more you turn your back to Christ, sin is developing. You look at alcoholics, look at those who are hooked on drugs. Where did they begin? Just by sampling, or by social drinking. And what does sin do? It hooks you. And once it hooks you, boy, then you have all kinds of problems, and your family has all kinds of problems, because there is a development. So just because you reject the gospel now doesn't mean that you'll have the same opportunity, because sin develops. It gets ahold of you until you reach the point of no return. Don't you ever play with the gospel and postpone your acceptance, because that's what the devil wants you to do. The devil will say, “Look man, you're too young. You need to enjoy life, until you get old. When your one leg is in the grave then accept Christ.”

That's a deception, young people, because there is a development. If you allow sin to continue to develop in you it will get a stronger and stronger hold on you until you reach the point where you cannot, like Saul, turn back to God. And you're finished. I have seen too many people in that camp. So please, young people, do not treat the gospel lightly. Yes, sin will give you fun, it will give you wonderful pleasure, but please look at Romans 6:23:

For the wages of sin is death....

The end result, says Paul, of sin is death. Yes, have fun today but tomorrow you must die. Romans 6:20:

When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

That doesn't mean that you were incapable of doing righteousness, but you were incapable of doing GENUINE righteousness. There are some people who don't like verse 20. It is true that the

sinful man can do many right things, but never with a right motive. Therefore, only the Christian can produce righteousness without “self” in it because he has received the gift of Agape. That is why God says in Isaiah 64:6:

...All our righteous acts are like filthy rags....

Not because the acts are bad; it’s because the motives are bad, because you’re a slave to sin. It is impossible for an unconverted man to produce righteousness without selfish motives. That is what the Reformers meant by “total depravity.”

Verses 21 and 22 say that, when you were born a slave of sin, it began to develop. When you accept Christ, and righteousness becomes now your way of life, please notice there is a development there, too. So please don’t expect brand-new Christians to live the same way as those who have lived 30 years after accepting Christ. There must be a growth.

And what happens? While you are growing in

righteousness and holiness and in sanctification, you fall. Is there condemnation? No, because you are not under law but under grace. But please remember the direction or development must be toward righteousness. And, therefore, verses 21 and 22 say that each slavery has fruit:

What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Whom is he talking to? He's talking to those who have obeyed from the heart the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul, in Galatians 5, will explain, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, holiness, temperance, and here (Romans 6:22) he puts it in one word: holiness (or sanctification). And the end is everlasting life.

So both slaveries have a development, both slaveries have fruit [or benefit], and both slaveries

have an end result [Romans 6:23]:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Please notice, Paul does not use the word “wages” for eternal life, because eternal life is a gift. Yes, righteousness is produced in you but never as a contribution towards eternal life. That’s the evidence, that is the fruit, but never the means of salvation.

Chapter 18

Delivered from Under the Law

(Romans 7:1-6)

Do you not know, brothers — for I am speaking to men who know the law — that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us,

we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. [Romans 7:1-6]

Is Paul talking about believers or nonbelievers? The question is not new. Right through the history of the Christian church this has been the great argument of Romans 7. Men like Origen, or Wesley, or the great scholar Wyse, or Moffat, or the British scholar C.H. Dodd — all take the position that this is the unconverted person that Paul is talking about. On the other side you have Augustine, and you have Luther, and you have Calvin, and you have that famous Swedish theologian, Anders Nygren, and the British scholar John Stott, who say, “No, he’s talking about the Christian.” And so the battle has been going on.

I do not know if you have wrestled with the battle, but I have. If I had a choice, I would say that Paul is talking about the Christian. I’ll give you my reasons:

1. From verse 14 onwards, Paul moves from

the past tense, which was predominant in the previous verses, to the present continuous tense in verse 14 onwards. That would hardly be the case if he were talking of his preconverted experience.

2. My second argument would be: what Paul is talking of in Romans 7, this tremendous struggle with defeat, completely contradicts what he says about himself as a Pharisee, in Philippians 3:6. There he says:

...As for legalistic righteousness, [I was] faultless.

Here [Romans 7:24] he cries:

What a wretched man I am!

This is a complete contradiction to his preconverted experience.

3. The third argument I will give is Romans 7:22, where Paul says:

For in my inner being I delight in God's law....

It is not normal for an unconverted man to delight in the law of God. In fact, Romans 8:7 says:

...The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

So, again, verse 22 implies that he's talking of his Christian experience.

4. Then, look at the context of the whole section. Romans 5, 6, 7, and 8 are dealing with the Christian. Why would he suddenly turn to his non-Christian experience?

5. Finally, there are statements, like Romans 8:23, where he talks about groaning, and Galatians 5:17 where he talks about the struggle between flesh and spirit which agree with Romans 7, and which have to do with Christian experience.

But I would take that if I had a choice. But

when I look at Romans 7 as a unit, I am convinced now that to ask the question whether Paul is talking about the believer or the unbeliever is to miss the point Paul had in mind when he wrote the chapter.

Paul did not even think of that issue because what Paul is doing in Romans 7 is proving a very important point, a point that you and I need to come to grips with. And that is this: God's holy law, which is good, which is spiritual, which is righteous, and sinful human nature, which is the same in the believer and in the unbeliever (that's why the question is meaningless), these two are incompatible. And because they are incompatible, you and I can never be saved by the works of the law.

You see, Paul made a statement in Romans 6:14 which, to the Jewish community, would be blasphemy, and would be blasphemy probably even to some Adventist communities. Because, you see, in Romans 6:14, Paul says:

For sin shall not be your master, because you

are not under law, but under grace.

Now he has told us in Romans 3:19 and 20 that we are under the law. And, because we are under the law, the whole world stands condemned.

In Romans 6:14 he says that you Christians are no longer under the law and the reason for that is because we have been delivered from under the law. But for Paul to make such a statement was very risky, because Paul was planning to visit Rome. If he did not explain what he meant, and why he believed what he believed (not just because he was inspired but because there was a real reason), he would be lynched if he went to Rome without explaining.

How do I know? Turn to Acts 21. Let me show you an experience that Paul went through. Paul had returned from his third missionary journey and, like a good evangelist, he gave his report. And his report was that God had blessed his ministry tremendously, so that the gentiles all over the Middle East had accepted the gospel. And

the brethren in Jerusalem, the pillars of the church, said to Paul, “Do you know, we have had a similar blessing in Jerusalem. Many of the Jews have also accepted the gospel.” And they all said, “Praise the Lord.”

But James, the “General Conference President,” said to Paul, “But we have a problem. These Jewish Christians have been hearing about you and they think that you are a heretic, that you are against the law of God, and against the temple, and against the people. But we know that you are not against the law, you are against legalism. But they don’t understand what you’re talking about. They have misunderstood you. So please, Paul, why don’t you do something. Shave your head (it wasn’t hard for Paul because he didn’t have too much hair, that’s what the scholars tell us; so I am happy to have good company) and go through the cleansing process to show the Jewish Christians that you are not against the law.”

Unfortunately, this wonderful scheme backfired. I believe myself that that was not advice

from God. It was James' good counsel and it backfired. I can see why, because if somebody goes through a cleansing process, he is admitting that he is wrong. They were accusing him against the law.

So after he had gone through the process and finally entered the temple, because he could not before that time, a group of Jews grabbed him. I want you to notice what they said in Acts 21:28. They grabbed him and they cried out:

“Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place.

“We've got the rascal! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against:

1. the people (he's anti-Jew);
2. the law, and
3. this place (the temple).

And furthermore, he also brought Greeks (barbarians, nonbelievers) into the temple, defiling God's holy place.”

So when Paul says in Romans 6:14, “We are no longer under the law,” those are the kind of statements that got Paul into trouble. So he has to explain.

Chapter 7 is telling us how we were delivered from the law and why. Now verses 1-6 deal with “how” we were delivered. He also touches on “why” there a little bit but his main thrust is how we were delivered from under the law. Verse 7 to the end, in two other sections, verse 7 to 13 or 14, and (then) the rest, is dealing with “why.” Being such an important passage, I want to spend three studies on chapter 7. But first of all, let's look at the first six verses. This is what I want to concentrate on now. Listen to how he introduces the subject [Romans 7:1]:

Do you not know, brothers — for I am

speaking to men who know the law....

So he has a specific group within the Roman community to whom he's addressing this problem. Who do you think he's talking about? "I speak to those who know the law." Well, if he were living today he would say, "I speak to you Adventists."

I was listening to John Stott, the great British scholar, one day and he made a statement. He said, "I'm asking my congregation [he has about a thousand people attending his church] how many of you can recite the Ten Commandments without looking in the Bible?"

Of that thousand people, only one hand went up. Now I did not put up my hand because I was a visitor, but I said to myself, "I bet that one hand is an Adventist." If I were to ask today, "How many of you can recite the Ten Commandments?" I probably would have one hand that would NOT go up.

...I am speaking to men who know the law....

The very first thing the Jews were taught when they were growing up as babies was the law. Then he makes this fundamental statement [Romans 7:1]:

...The law has authority over a man only as long as he lives.

The word “dominion” [used in some translations] means rulership, jurisdiction. What he’s saying is true of any law. As long as you are living you are under the law of where you are. We are living in America, we are under the law of America. But you can be under the law of America even outside of America. I remember when I was a missionary in Africa, I didn’t realize that I still had to write in my tax form papers. I thought I was exempt for two reasons:

1. I was not yet an American citizen, I was a resident.
2. I was not living in America; I was living in the Third World.

When I came back they said, “Have you been filing your tax returns?”

I said, “What’s that? Never heard of it.”

They said, “Well, you’re guilty. You have to pay a fine.” And I was happy to pay the fine because it was six percent of my tax and my tax was zero. And so six percent of zero was zero.

But I was under the law. You are under the law as long as you are living. If you die, then the law no longer has a hold on you. That is true of any law. The question is, of course, “Which law is he talking about?”

I was explaining to my pastors in Ethiopia that this was primarily the moral law that Paul had in mind; he was including the whole of the law because the Jews did not make that distinction between ceremonial and moral like we do. One of the pastors was horrified at me for saying this was the moral law. I said, “Why?”

He said, “Because I have just come from Middle East College, and we were taught that this was the ceremonial law.”

I asked, “Who taught you?”

He said, “I can’t remember his name.” It was a very difficult name. “But I know he had a Ph.D.”

I replied, “Well, let’s see what Paul, the Ph.D., has to say. Please read verse 7” [of Romans 7]. And he read. And I said, “Read it aloud.”

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”

“Which law is Paul quoting from?” I asked.

He responded, “We never read verse 7.”

Let us be honest with the passage. Well, that shut him up but there still was a problem. You mean to say that we are delivered from under the law? Yes, but in what sense? Why? That is what Romans 7 is all about.

Now Paul then presents an illustration in verses 2 and 3. It's a difficult illustration, but it is one that we need to understand in the context of the Bible. I say difficult because some of you ladies will disagree with Paul's argument here, but let's look at it:

For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive....

In other words, when a woman marries a man, she's stuck with him for the rest of her life, until he dies. That's what Paul is saying. Why? Because the Bible teaches that when two people get married they are married until "death do us part." But the word "bound" means more than simply, "She's stuck to him." It also means that she is under him, by the law.

Which law? Well, there are three laws. Paul is not talking of all three laws. He's talking of law number two. I'm saying this because I don't want any man to take advantage of law number two if you're a Christian. Law number three applies to Christians which is found in Ephesians 5:25:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her....

And, please remember, Christ loved the church even when "she" was not good to Him. Keep that in mind.

But law number one was when God created Adam and Eve. They were equal. But when sin came in, he gave them another law. It's found in Genesis three, and it's in verse 16:

To the woman he said [that is, God said to Eve], "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband,

and he will rule over you.”

Well, I could do that in Africa with my wife, but in America I dare not do it. In Ethiopia, when the Marxists took over, the Ethiopian government said to the wives, “You are now equal with your husband, don’t let him rule over you.” One Ethiopian came home and his wife did not cook him his supper. He said, “Where’s supper?”

She said, “I have decided that you can cook your own supper.” He was not willing to accept the Marxist philosophy; he went to his cupboard, pulled out his revolver, and shot her dead. Many men have taken advantage. Even in America wife abuse is terrible, primarily because of sin. He wants to rule over his wife. But Paul says:

...By law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive....

The problem is that this woman has found another man, a wonderful fellow. She says, “Boy, I wish I could marry him.”

Now, what's the problem with the first marriage? Well, there are three problems with the first marriage.

First of all, her husband is not sympathetic. When she makes a mistake, when she burns his spaghetti, he says to her, "I'm going to punish you for this!"

She says, "Look, please, I was busy. I didn't realize the knob was on high."

He says, "I don't care whether you made a mistake or not, I'm going to punish you." That's all he can do; no sympathy.

Secondly, he won't lift a single finger to help her. One day he tells her, "Please cook for me some rice and curry."

She says, "But I've never cooked it before!" So she calls her Pastor, "Can you come and help me?" Well, her Pastor can. But she says to the husband,

“You know how to cook it, can you help me?”

He says, “My job is not to help, my job is to order you around.”

The third problem is that all he can do is to command her to obey him and, when she disobeys, he condemns her.

So she’s always under guilt, always living in fear, with no peace, trying her best to please her husband, and now she finds another man. But she can’t marry him because he’s also a good fellow. She thinks, “Boy, I wish my old man would die.” And that’s the problem, that’s the worst problem, he won’t die. Even when she puts arsenic in the Postum [cereal drink], he won’t die.

You know why? Because the first husband is the law. Now, let’s be very clear: the law is good, it is holy, what it is demanding is good. But there are certain things that the law cannot do.

First of all, it cannot sympathize with you.

Why? Because the law is not a person, it is rules. When you are caught by the policeman for speeding, and by grace he forgives you, which is very seldom, please remember it is not the traffic law that forgave, it is the policeman. And what he did was really contrary to the law. He's breaking the law in forgiving you because he's not employed to forgive you. You didn't pay him tax money to forgive you, you paid him tax money to punish you. Because that's all that the law can do. It's not a person, it has no feelings, no sympathy.

Secondly, neither is the law capable of helping you. For I read in Romans 8:3:

For what the law was powerless to do....

What is it that the law cannot do? The law cannot produce righteousness in a sinful person. It can demand righteousness, but never produce it. It can't help you even. All the law can do is say to you, as Galatians 3:10 says:

All who rely on observing the law are under a

curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

“Cursed is the one who doesn’t obey me and do everything I tell you to do.” Can you see why to live under the law means to live under fear, to live under insecurity, to live without peace, without assurance? And you say, “Boy, I wish I could marry the second man.” Do you know who the second man is? He is Jesus Christ:

1. He can sympathize with you. Hebrews 4:15:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.

So He can overcome it. Can you imagine such a wonderful husband?

2. He can do more than sympathize with you, He can help you. The trouble is I’m already stuck

with this old man. What do I do? Hebrews 2:18:

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

So Christ can sympathize, He can help.

3. But I'll tell you what's best about Christ: He doesn't condemn. Romans 8:1:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....

If you look at the last verse of chapter 6, before he began chapter 7, Paul says two things:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Who pays wages for sin? The law, because I read in 1 Corinthians 15:56:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is

the law.

The law says to sin, “You must die.” Grace doesn’t say to the sinner, “You must die.” Grace says to the sinner, “I have a gift for you. It is eternal life.” That’s the gift of God. John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

So eternal life is not earned, it’s a gift to sinners.

But now, the problem is “my first husband will not die. I put poison in his Postum, he refuses to die.” Why? Because I read in Matthew 5:18:

I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

So she does not have a solution. According to

the illustration, the woman wants the husband to die, but the problem is he will not die. And those who say that the law was done away with do not know that the law cannot die.

“Well,” the second man says, “I can’t marry you if you are still married to the first man; so the first thing I have to do is to make your marriage null and void.” How do you do it? Well, there are two problems:

1. You can’t get the first husband to commit adultery because then you would have Biblical grounds for divorce. But the husband is good, he’s holy. You give him all the woman you want, he won’t touch them.
2. He refuses to die.

Whichever you look at it, there is no solution from the human point of view. So Christ says, “I have a solution.”

And the wife says, “Really? What is it?”

“Why don’t YOU die?”

She says, “I? If I die, how can I marry you?”

“Oh, I didn’t mean die by yourself. Let me take you and put an end to you. By putting an end to you, I annul your first marriage, then I’ll raise you up and you’ll be my wife.”

Look at verse 4, that’s the solution. Please notice in the illustration the woman wants the husband to die, but in the application, it’s not the husband who dies, it is we, the woman [Romans 7:4]:

So, my brothers, you also died to the law [that’s the first marriage] through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

Remember from our studies on Romans 6:

1. The death of Christ was a corporate death.
2. When you were baptized, you were baptized into Christ's death.

Two things happen when you die with Christ:

1. You are delivered from sin (Romans 6), and
2. You are delivered from under the law (Romans 7).

The law is still there, but you are no longer married to the law. So the law comes to you and says, "You obey me; otherwise, you will die."

You can say to him, "You can find another woman to say that to because I am no longer under your jurisdiction!"

But does that mean you can do what you like? No, you are not a widow, you are not free, there's no single person here. You're married in both cases, but now you're married to somebody else. Let's look at the whole thing. Verse 4:

So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

What kind of fruit? Turn to the gospel of John. Let's see what this second husband has to say about this fruit. You see, under the first marriage, you lived under what we call rules, dos and don'ts. But this is the policy under the new marriage. John 15:1:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

You are familiar with all that. But let's look at John 15, verse 4 onwards:

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

In the first marriage, what did you produce? Well, we'll come to verse 5 and see what you produced there. "But if you're married to me," says Christ, "I am not asking you to DO things, I am asking you to abide in Me." John 15:5:

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Here the Apostle Paul is saying, "If you're married to Christ you will bear much fruit." Now back to Romans 7:5:

For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.

Now what did Paul mean by the words "when we were controlled by the sinful nature" or, as some translations read, "when we were in the flesh"? It means "before we died," in our pre-converted state, while we were still under the law,

married to the law, depending on ourselves because the law will not help us. The only kind of fruit you bear under the law is sin, which ends up in death. Romans 7:6:

But now [now that you have accepted Christ and have become His bride], by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Before you accepted Christ, before you were baptized into Christ, the law held you in its grips. Which means that every time you disobeyed, the law says, “You must die!” It is a tragedy when we tell our people that every time a Christian falls, the law says you must die. We are still putting them under the law. That is why we have a most insecure church. The result is that we are not bearing fruits. Because, to God, fruit is not only doing something good, it is doing it with the right motive.

I’ll tell you a problem. Turn to Hebrews 2 and

see what the Apostle there says to us in Hebrews 2:14,15:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Paul is saying here that we human beings are born with a fear of dying. And I don't care how tough you are, young men, when you face death, that fear takes hold of you.

I had a cousin who worked for the United Nations. He was an agronomist. There were three countries in the world that were trying to produce a new grain, a marriage between wheat and rye, called triticale (you may have heard of it): Canada, Mexico, and Ethiopia. My cousin was in charge of Ethiopia. He was a Roman Catholic but he wasn't a practicing one and didn't see the need of God.

One day he was flying from one of the stations

in a an Ethiopian Airlines plane, and the pilot and the copilot were having an argument. Now, of course, he had been there seven years so he understood the language. They were arguing as to which direction they should take off. The pilot was a jet pilot from those big planes but they were short of a pilot so they asked him to fly this propeller plane. The copilot was accustomed to this plane and he said, “No, you’re going in the wrong direction.”

The jet pilot said, “Look, who knows better, me or you?” So they were arguing, and here was my cousin, sitting in the front row, listening to these two fellows arguing, because there was no separation between the pilot and the passengers. While they were taking off the plane began to shudder and refused to climb. My cousin looked out and there were the eucalyptus trees coming right in front of them. Suddenly he remembered God. He put his head down and held on and said, “Lord, save me!”

And the Lord saved him. That wing hit one of

the branches of the trees and the engine with the propeller took off, and the propeller was still travelling at a tremendous speed and it tore in front of the plane, and ripped the front. He opened his eyes and the propeller nicked off his watch without touching him. That's how close he came to death. He looked up and there was the blue sky, with the plane in front, completely wiped out, six people, two pilots, and three tourists were simply churned up. The plane was sitting at an angle, so it was about nine feet to the ground. He jumped to save his life, because the Lord had saved him. Then he remembered there were passengers in the back, so he opened the door and pulled them out.

We have a God Who is able to save. And we have a God who doesn't keep on bugging you with guilt every time you fall. He says, "Look, the reason you fell is because, for that moment, you stopped abiding in Me. Please, let this be a reminder that only when you abide in Me can you bear fruit." And please notice verse 6 of Romans 7:

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Now what is Paul saying in verse 6? Please notice, the new marriage doesn't mean sitting idle, it means serving.

What does he mean by “the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code”? Under the law, you did serve the law, but for one reason, out of fear: fear of punishment, fear of being wiped out, fear of the curse. So every time you were keeping the law you were doing it out of fear. Why? Because if you did not obey the law, what would it do? Punish you! It is a tragedy when you have Christians serving God out of fear.

But what is “the new way of the Spirit”? It means you serve God out of love, out of appreciation. When Paul says in Philippians, “For me to live is Christ,” when Paul says, “I am a slave of Jesus Christ,” he is not saying it out of

compulsion. “I, with all my heart, want to be a slave of Jesus Christ. I want to serve Him, I’ll go where He sends me, I will do what He tells me, because He is my Friend and my Savior, and I am willing to do anything for Him, because I love Him.” And so Paul will say [Galatians 5:6]:

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

If you are not delivered from under the law, and you call yourself a Christian, you are guilty of committing adultery, because the illustration says, if the woman marries the second man while she’s still married to the first man, she’s committing adultery. I have a feeling that we have a lot of spiritual adulterers and adulteresses in this church. Because they still want to be under the law.

Are the law and Christ enemies? No. Are the law and the sinful nature enemies? Yes. That’s where the problem is. The problem is not the law; the law is holy, it is good, it is spiritual, it is

righteous. The problem is that, in the first marriage, I am a sinner incompatible with the law and, therefore, that marriage can never work. All I do is live in fear, insecurity.

But when I accept Christ and am delivered from under the law, and I'm married to Christ, I'll tell you what happens. Not only does He give me peace, not only does He give me assurance, and not only does He give me hope, but He produces fruits. And you know something about the fruits? It is in harmony with the law. What I failed to keep in the first marriage is now in harmony with what I keep. Because I read in Galatians 5:22-23:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Which simply means such things are not against the law.

So what I failed to keep in the first marriage,

I'm doing in the second marriage, without fear, with joy and peace. And I think you will agree with me, the second marriage is a wonderful one.

But may God deliver us from the idea that we are still ruled by dos and don'ts. We are no longer under the Old Covenant; we are under the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, the law is not written on tables of stone, it is written on our hearts. It becomes part of our delight, it becomes part of our desire. But we must remember that desiring and delighting in the law is not enough; we need to remain in Christ.

I can assure you that the life Christ lived 2,000 years ago, a life of love, is the life that He wants to live today in you and in me. It is my prayer that this life will be manifested in our lives, that the world will see God manifested in the flesh once again, and give Him glory and praise.

Chapter 19

Exceedingly Sinful

(Romans 7:7-13)

In Romans 6 Paul reminds us — that is, we baptized Christians — that in Christ we have died to sin, which means that, in Christ, by this death, we have been delivered from the dominion of sin.

Then in chapter 7, the first six verses, which we covered last study, he points out that, in Christ, in this same death by which we were delivered from the dominion of sin, we have also been liberated from the jurisdiction of the law.

When you put those two facts together you create a problem. Because the law was given to us by God. In other words, God is the Author of the law. It sounds like Paul is saying that law and sin are synonymous, or at least they are partners, they belong to the same camp. And, if you say that, then you are saying that God is the Author of sin

also.

So what Paul does in verse 7 and up to verse 13 is, first of all, clarify the problem. Then he goes on to show what purpose the law has in God's plan of salvation. This is a very important passage because it has some very important lessons for us as a people. So let us go step-by-step and look at what Paul is trying to say. In verse 7 of Romans 7, he begins with a question:

What shall we say, then? Is the law sin?

Now keep in mind what he said in verse 6. It was the concluding verse of our last study. In verse 6 he says:

...We have been released from the law....

And he has already told us in Romans 6:22 that:

...You have been set free from sin....

So now comes the question, “Does this mean that law is synonymous with sin?” What is His answer?

Certainly not!

Yes, there is a relationship, and the relationship is this: the law defines for us what sin is.

Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”

Now I want to pause here and bring out two very important points.

First of all, this statement in verse 7 tells us what Law Paul had in mind primarily in discussing our deliverance from under law. “You shall not covet” belongs to what law? The Ten Commandments [Exodus 20:17].

I would not have known what sin was except

through the law.

By the way, there is no other law that defines sin except the moral law. Every other sin is a ramification of the moral law. In fact, if you had a sin outside the moral law then the Ten Commandments is no longer a perfect definition of sin. Therefore, any argument that Paul is referring here to the ceremonial law will not comply or agree with the passage itself. Of course, to the Jew “the Law” meant the five books of Moses and sometimes meant the whole Old Testament. But you can see that Paul primarily has in mind that it is the moral law from which we have been liberated. I know that sounds like heresy. That’s why this is a difficult chapter.

But let’s be honest. And I’ll tell you, if you pervert the truth that Paul is bringing out here you’ll miss out on a blessing, and I will show you what it is as we go along.

Secondly, Paul had 10 commandments to chose from; which one did he choose? “You shall not

covet.” What does it mean to covet? It does not mean to “do” something. “To covet” means to cherish a desire, to cherish or to crave for something that does not belong to you.

I feel that Paul had a special reason for choosing this commandment. I’ll tell you why, because here he’s telling us something that we need to know, that God’s definition of sin is a complete contradiction, or it is different from man’s definition of sin. It is important that we realize this, because if we project man’s definition of sin onto the law, or unto God, we miss the point of the purpose that God gave the law.

What do I mean that it is “different”? Let me give you an illustration. Let us say that I’m walking on the main street of this town and there I see parked a current model Porche car with six forward gears and all the trimmings for leaving black marks on the tarmac. I look at that car and my male instincts for speed come into my heart. I look into the dashboard and I look into the speedometer to see how much it can do, and I look

at that gear box — it says six gears — and I say to myself, “Boy, I wish I had this car.”

Can the policeman come and nab me for stealing that car? No. Can the law of God accuse me of sinning? Yes, because man’s definition of sin is an act. Until you commit the act you are not guilty for the simple reason that men can’t read the hearts of men. But God defines sin not as act, but a desire that has been accepted in your mind.

The moment you realize that this is how the Lord defines sin you realize that you are in bad shape. This is why we need to come to grips with God’s definition of sin. Because the Jews made a mistake. The Jews defined sin as an act. So the Pharisee could stand up and say, “I have never killed anybody,” or “I have never committed adultery,” and Jesus said, “One moment, one moment.”

Turn to Matthew 5. Listen to what Jesus said to this self-righteous Pharisee. I suppose He may have done the same thing when He wrote on the

sand, when Mary was taken captive for the “act.” But look at Matthew 5, we’ll start with verse 21:

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago [this is what the leaders of your church taught you], “Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.”

That, by the way, is a quotation, “You shall not murder.” That’s a quotation from the Ten Commandments [Exodus 20:13].

But how did the Pharisees, how did the scribes, how did the leaders of Judaism interpret that commandment? To them murder was an act. They taught if you kill you will be in danger of the judgment, i.e., it’s condemnation and death. Jesus continues in Matthew 5:22:

But I tell you [this is the true definition of that commandment] that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, “Raca” [an Aramaic term of contempt], is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But

anyone who says, “You fool!” will be in danger of the fire of hell.

In other words, murdering somebody doesn't begin with an act, it begins with a desire that you have cherished. Now remember that, as Jesus talked, some of the Jews were already planning his murder. As far as Christ was concerned, they had already committed the act in their minds. Then He goes on in verse 27, the same idea:

You have heard that it was said, “Do not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Boy! We're in trouble, men ... and women. We are in trouble. So we need to look at sin from God's point of view. I'm especially speaking of those who think that they can go to heaven by being good. Let me ask you a question. You have a business deal on Monday: somebody's coming to your house and you want to sell it. But today it's Sabbath and you're sitting in church but you

are thinking, “I wonder if I will get \$150,000?” You are thinking business. Physically, you are in church. Outwardly it sounds like, it looks like, you are listening to the Pastor; but inwardly you’re discussing business with yourself. Have you broken the Sabbath? From the Pastor’s point of view, no. From God’s point of view, yes. From the law’s point of view, yes. So can you understand why “by observing the law no one will be justified” [Galatians 2:16]? We have a problem, folks.

I want to give you one more text, because this text may help us to deal with the problem that we are facing. When I say “we,” I mean the Christian church. And because we as a denomination are still wrestling with the issue, we have not come up with a clear statement. It’s a problem in this country, primarily. But let me give you the text and I’ll expose to you what the problem is. You are familiar with it once I mention it. Turn to James 1. There are three things that James brings out.

First of all, temptation. Is temptation sin? Temptation is a desire, but temptation is not sin. The question now is, “When does temptation become sin?” When? From man’s point of view, temptation becomes sin when you commit the act. But I want you to listen to how James defines when temptation becomes sin. I want you to notice the analogy that he uses here. Let’s read James 1:14:

...But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire [i.e., the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — human desires, the desires of the flesh], he is dragged away and enticed.

So when there is a craving created in your humanity, that’s a temptation. Whether it comes from outside or from within, temptation is to do something that is outside the will of God. Now listen to verse 15:

Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin [that’s the act]; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

So you have conception, you have birth, and you have death. The big issue today is about abortion in this country. You are familiar with the problem. The question is, “Is abortion killing?” That’s the big question, isn’t it? And there is an argument. To answer that question rightly we have to ask ourselves another question, “When does life begin?”

The answer to that is different from God and from man. Some medical doctors or scientists will say that life begins three months after conception. Some will say later than that, some earlier. There are all kind of arguments, and I’m not a medical man. But I do know what the Bible teaches. Life begins at conception, just like sin begins when the mind says, “Yes.” All you have to do is read your Bibles, Old and New Testament; life begins at conception.

Therefore, as far as I’m concerned, abortion is murder. And we are accusing the Germans of holocaust? Boy! Let’s look at ourselves, what we

are doing in our country. But that's a different study; I'm only giving you food for thought.

What I'm saying is that we need to look at things from God's perspective, not man's. I'll also address it from another angle: keeping the law. Is keeping the law an act or is it love? How does the Bible define keeping the law? Romans 13:10:

Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.

But I read in the New Testament, in 1 Corinthians 13, that if I give my goods to the poor, and even offer up my body to death for a good cause or even for martyrdom, and I do not have agape, I am not keeping the law; it's worth nothing. 1 Corinthians 13:1-8:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have

not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

So please remember, we need as Christians not to be swept by the thinking mentality of our culture or of the world or of scientists. One of the arguments today is about the creation. We need to look at it from God's point of view. Is it a literal day that he took to create this world or thousands of years? The question is not, "Did God create this world?" We all believe that, at least I hope all of us do. But we also need to ask the question, "What does the Bible teach in terms of HOW did He create this world?" How? Did He use His hands? No. He did what? Boy, He must be a very slow speaker if it took Him a thousand years to speak, "Let there be light." We ridicule God when we say

it took Him that long.

Let's go back and become Bible-centered Christians, whether we're dealing with the law or whether we're dealing with anything. That's why we need to look at this passage from the Biblical point of view. So let's go back now to Romans 7; two things:

1. Paul has in mind here the moral law. Let us be honest with the context. Please don't tell me that verse 7 is the moral law and verse 6 is the ceremonial law. You are now putting into the text what you want it to say, not what Paul is saying. Because verse 7 begins with a question and the question has to do with verse 6, "We have been released from the law."

2. Sin, according to the law, God's law, is not beginning with an act, but beginning with a desire that you have said "yes" to in your conscience. If I'm traveling and thirsty and I get off the freeway and stop at a 7-11 for a drink, and I go into the place and say, "Can you give me a can of root

beer?”

The storekeeper says, “I’m sorry we’re out in the sticks here. We’re out of all our drinks, we’re waiting for the truck. All we have is beer.”

I say to myself, “Well, nobody around here knows me. One can won’t hurt me and, after all, Paul did say a little wine is good for your stomach.” We are experts at rationalizing with the Bible. So I say, “Okay, I’ll have a can of beer.” Then I hear a car coming to fill with gas and I look around and, lo and behold, there is a member of my local church! I turn around to the storekeeper who’s just gone to the fridge to bring me the drink and I say, “By the way, I just remembered I have an appointment, never mind the drink.”

Have I sinned? Not according to the church member; he hasn’t seen me do a thing wrong. But before the law of God, I have already sinned. When you realize this, it will destroy any idea that you can save yourself by law keeping or by being good.

Goodness is from God. That is why, to the man who asked the question “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” [Luke 18:18-19 or Mark 10:17-18], Jesus said,

Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

And we read in Romans 3:10-12 when we dealt with it:

There is no one righteous.... There is no one who does good, not even one.

But let’s go to Romans 7:8:

But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.

Because Paul was raised up a Jew, and the Jews looked at sin only in terms of acts, Paul did not realize that, as a Pharisee, he was sinning. How do

I know? Because he says so in Philippians 3:6:

...As for legalistic righteousness, [I was] faultless.

But when he discovered that sin is more than an act, when he discovered from the law of God that sin is a desire that I have cherished, he said to himself, “O wretched man that I am!” He said to himself, “What I thought was giving me life was giving me death.” Look at Romans 7, verses 9 and 10:

Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.

What does he mean, “Once I was alive apart from law”? There are many interpretations. Some scholars say that what Paul meant is that, when he was a baby up to the age of accountability, which to the Jew was 12, 13 years old, at which time he knew the law, head knowledge, but he did not

understand the law. He thought he was alive, but, when he became a son of the commandment, which is the term used for those who become Pharisees (because the word “Pharisee” means zealous for the law), he discovered that he was a sinner worthy of death.

But I would like to suggest that this interpretation is wrong. I’ll tell you why: because nowhere in the New Testament — and, remember, almost half of the New Testament is Paul — nowhere does he ever mention this tension when he was a Pharisee. When you read Paul’s description of himself before his conversion, he’s always talking of himself as being good.

So what I believe he’s saying here in verse 9 is that there was a time that he thought that the law would give him life because he was keeping it. His church, his religion had told him, “If you keep the law, you will live.” What his church had done was taken that law and made it into rules. And he kept all those rules, and he thought that by keeping those rules he was obeying the law, he was alive

and, therefore, qualified for life. Then one day God opened his eyes and showed him the true meaning of the law, and so he says in verse 10:

I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.

He discovered that the law never gives life to a sinner. All that the law gives to a sinner is death. Romans 6:23:

The wages of sin is death.

Who says that? The law of God.

Now I want you to be clear, because we have fallen into the same trap. We make rules, and we think that as long as we keep those rules we are keeping the law of God and we become self-righteous, self-satisfied.

The Jews had all kinds of rules. Let me expose you to a couple of them. Many of the buildings in the Middle East are flat-roofed, and they use the

flat roof for a terrace, for evening supper or for visitation when it's nice and cool. But they did not have a staircase like we have in our homes; they had a wooden ladder that they would put up and they would climb.

But because at night people would come and steal, they would put the ladder in the house. Now on Sabbath, if they wanted to have a little lay activity, they were not allowed to carry that ladder to the roof and place it up, from inside the house to outside. Because if they carried it, that would be breaking the Sabbath, that would be working.

But if one part of the ladder touched the ground, in other words, if they dragged the ladder, it was not sin. Wonderful isn't it? They had loopholes. So they would drag the ladder and make sure that one part touched the ground; as long as it did, they would not be sinning.

I remember, as a young person, my priest told me that if I touched the wafer, the Lord's Supper, with my teeth and broke it, I would be sinning and

blood would gush out. So I remember, with great fear, when the priest put that wafer on my tongue, I would do my very best that it would not touch my teeth. One day it did and I panicked. I had visions of blood gushing out of my mouth.

I can imagine a Jew who, by mistake, lifted the ladder off the ground would go on his knees and say, “God, please forgive me. I didn’t intend to do that; it was a mistake.”

Let me give you another one; this is a good one for the young boys. They had a law that you could not walk so many kilometers, so many miles, on the Sabbath. They called it a Sabbath day’s journey. Let us say it was half a mile, and a boy wanted to go and visit his girlfriend, who lived two miles away. How would he do it and not break the Sabbath?

Well, they had a wonderful loophole. If you traveled half a mile and stopped and drank, or had even a sip of water or anything, or ate, then you could walk another half mile. So they would walk

a half mile and knock on a door and say, “Please excuse me, may I have a glass of water?” Everybody there knew what it was for. He would take a sip; he was not thirsty, he just wanted a little sip. “Thank you.” Then he could walk another half a mile. Then he would take another sip, and walk another half a mile, until he came to his girlfriend’s home. He could visit his girlfriend and still keep the Sabbath.

Now what happened if it was out in the sticks where there were no houses? Well, they had a good solution. If you swallowed your spittle, that would be acceptable, too.

Now you’re laughing, but I’ll tell you, we have made rules, too. We enforce these rules in our homes and in our churches and that’s why some of you have come to me and said, “Why don’t you tell us how to keep the Sabbath?” Why don’t you ask the Lord of the Sabbath? The Sabbath doesn’t belong to me. Up there, He’s the Boss.

One day my son came up to me and with him

was a group of kids. They wanted to go and see a kind of a rodeo. It was on Sunday, but, of course, they would need to travel on Sabbath. In America it is not wrong to travel on the Sabbath. You try that in Africa and boy, you are sinning. But in America it's okay; each country has its own rules. That's the trouble. In Scandinavia, you can go swimming on the Sabbath. In Italy, you play football on the Sabbath; you can even have sports.

So they came to me for permission. I said, "How can I give you permission to do something that doesn't belong to me? It's like asking me, 'Can I get some money from someone else's bank account?' I can't give you money that doesn't belong to me." I said, "Why don't you ask the Boss of the day?" They did not see what I meant, so I gave them a text, Isaiah 58:13-14:

If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you

please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord....

So we don't want rules. Our kids are tired of rules, because that is not Christianity. Paul was given rules and he obeyed those rules. He thought he could make it to heaven. Then God said, "No, those rules are not my commandments. They are the traditions of men. And by those rules you have turned away the law of God."

So the commandment, when you understand it as Paul meant it to be, you'll find that it brings to you and to me nothing but death; for I read in Romans 7:11-12:

For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Then he creates another problem in verse 13:

Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

Now please notice the word “sin” here is in the singular. He’s not referring to acts, he’s referring to what we are.

What is Paul telling us all about here? I would like to give you four reasons why God gave us the law. What is the purpose of the law? Paul discovered the purpose of the law as a Christian, and he is expounding it to us here, and I need to expound it to you.

First, the law defines sin. Not as we define it, but as God defines it. Paul says [Romans 7:7]:

I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”

Man says sin is an act. God's law says sin is a cherished desire. "I would not have known that," says Paul, "except through the law."

So I need the law to get a correct, Divine definition of sin.

Secondly, the law not only defines sin, but it exposes sin from its hiding place. Sin dwells inside you, and we will deal with that when we come to verses 14-25. It needs to be brought out in the open. If I want to bring an animal out of its hiding place, I will put out bait. The law brings out the sin that is in us, hidden, out into the open. If you want to use modern terms, it brings sin from the subconscious to the conscious. Sin is hidden right deep in us, it is part of us. The law brings it out.

This brings us to reason number three. How does the law bring it out? This may be hard for you to swallow, but, when you realize what it's saying, it is true. It is because the law provokes

sin. What do I mean by “provoke sin”?

I’ll give you an illustration that will help. When I was principal of the Adventist college in Uganda, thanks to a 13th Sabbath Offering, we had enough money to buy a tractor for our farm. The old tractor was in ruins and shambles. One of the reasons why it was in ruins was because the kids who were working on the farm would use it as a taxi. Instead of walking the mile down the road to the farm, they would pile on it and let the driver drive them to the farm area. So the fenders broke and everything went to pieces.

I said, “This tractor is going to last longer than the old one.” So I made a rule, and the rule was that no kid was allowed to sit on the fender. If they did, they would have to pay a fine of 10 shillings, which in those days was about 75 cents, or maybe more than that. But, for the African, that was a lot of money. Lo and behold, the very next day, there was a kid sitting on it. What made it worse was that he was not even a farm worker. He was caught, he was brought to my office, and I said,

“Why did you do that? You knew the rule.”

He said, “I would never have done it if you did not make the rule.”

Human nature, which is sinful, does not like to be told what to do. The best way to stop you ingathering is to command you, “I want you to go out, otherwise....” I will get nobody out there, I know. You don’t produce works by whipping people.

The human nature, which is sinful, is rebellious towards the law, and the moment you tell them, “Don’t do it,” they will do it. When our kids were small, we were in furlough in this country, in Michigan. For the first time in their lives — I think my daughter was three years old — they tasted cherries. We don’t grow cherries in Africa. They were excited; this was a wonderful fruit. We went back to Africa and, a year later, we were visiting my mother at the coast. She had a pepper tree that grew cherry peppers. It looked like a cherry. So my little girl said, “Mommy, cherries!”

Her mother said, “No, they are not cherries.” Then she made a statement. She said, “Don’t eat them because it will burn.”

To her little mind, “burn” has to do with fire. How can a fruit produce fire? The only thing she knew was her mother said, “Don’t do it.” She said, “I’ll do it!” So she went and ate it. Of course, the fire alarm sounded. We had to give her doses of water and whatever we could to cool down the fire, to put out the fire. She did not describe it as burning. She said, “The cherry bit me.” So that’s her definition of burning.

Her dear brother, two years older said, “What did it feel like?”

She said, “It bit me, it burnt!” trying to use her mother’s words. He could not fathom it.

We had to remind him, “If you eat, it will do the same thing to you.”

Lo and behold, the next day, he took a bite. We had to buy ice cream, because he was older, and you needed some more potent stuff to cool down the fire. He took a bigger bite than his sister did.

I believe when we make rules in our schools, we are encouraging our kids to say, "I'll do it." We have to love our kids into doing. We have to make it a way so that they will hate to do what sin is. Because the human nature is naturally rebellious. The moment you say, "Keep off the grass" on the school compound, you'll watch kids walking right through it. Why? Is it because they're worse than we older folks? No, it's because we are sinful and the law brings out into the open the rebellious nature.

But the law also does something else: it condemns sin to death. It tells us that sin will lead you to the grave. Let us be frank, sin is enjoyable. Am I correct? If you tell me sin is not enjoyable, you are lying. Because if sin is not enjoyable then temptation becomes meaningless. Temptation is a

tremendous pull because the temptation is desirable. And that's because sin is enjoyable. But the end result of sin is death. How do you know it? The law tells me that. Which law? The moral law.

Therefore, let me summarize:

1. Sin goes beyond an act. The definition of sin is beyond an act, it's a cherished desire.
2. It exposes sin from its hiding place.
3. It provokes sin so that we realize that human nature is enmity with God, and His law.
Romans 8:7:

...The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

4. It condemns sin to death.

But as Paul goes to verse 13, he makes it very clear to us that the law is not responsible for any of these four things. All that the law does is simply

make us aware of it. The law is not responsible for my sins, it is not responsible for my death, it is not responsible for evoking in me enmity with God. The law simply opens my eyes and shows me what I am. It is sin that is to blame for all these four things.

But what part does the law have in the plan of salvation? It shows me that sin is a deceiver. You know why? Because the origin of sin is Satan. Do you know what the Bible calls Him? “The father of lies.” Do you know what the first lie he told our parents was? “If you eat of this fruit, you will not die” [Genesis 3:4].

Sin deceived Paul, that you could go to heaven by being good. Sin deceives us today, that it doesn't bring any harm. So young people will enter into drug experiences. “We are too young, we are too strong, sin can never do anything wrong to me.” Until it is too late. Sin is a deceiver, and the end result of that deception is death, it kills. We need to realize that sin deceives, sin kills.

But that is not the only reason why God gave the moral law. He also gave the moral law so that when we discover this thing, we may run to Christ as the solution. That is why, the moment we, as a people, insisted that the law of Galatians was not the moral law, we destroyed the purpose of the law.

Galatians 3:19 is the passage that produced that great controversy 100 years ago. Jones and Waggoner said, “This is the moral law.” The brethren said, “No, it is the ceremonial law.” And we lost the whole point of Galatians 3.

I want to conclude with that because it tells me what Romans 7 is telling me. The purpose of the law is twofold: to shut you up into the prison of sin and to point you to Christ as the only solution to the sin problem. So I’ll conclude with Galatians 3:19:

What, then, was the purpose of the law?

What law? It is not the ceremonial law that Paul has in mind. Yes, it’s true that, if you read the

whole of Galatians it includes both moral and ceremonial law. But when I come to Galatians 3:19 onwards, Paul has specifically in mind the moral law. Paul continues:

It was added [i.e., added to the promise that was given to Abraham] because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.

In other words, it was added to show us human beings that we are transgressors. Who is the seed? Christ. In other words, the law was given to us before Christ to show us that we were sinners in need of a Savior. And when the promise comes, the law has done its job. How do I know? Because I read Galatians 3:21 onwards:

Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law.

But God never gave the law to give you life.

Then why did God give the law? Galatians 3:22:

But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin [and that's what the law convinces me of], so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

Believe what? That I am a sinner and I need a Savior. Galatians 3:23:

Before this faith came [before Christ came], we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.

We were kept in prison with no hope of escape, same as Romans 7. Galatians 3:24:

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

The law is our tutor, schoolmaster, policeman (the Greek word is “pedagogi”) to bring us to Christ. But don't forget verse 25:

Now that faith has come [once we have found Christ], we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

And the one in charge, the supervisor, the tutor is the law. We are no longer under the jurisdiction of the law. No longer can the law say, “If you disobey, you will die,” because we are no longer under it. We are under grace. But the law played a very important part to bring me under grace. Why? Because the gospel is “Not I, but Christ.” I’ll be frank with you, the “not I” is the hardest part in that formula. So, to make it meaningful to us, God gave the law that we might say “not I” or, to use Paul’s words in Philippians 3:3, God gave us the law that we might “put no confidence in the flesh” and “glory [rejoice] in Jesus Christ.” That’s the purpose of Romans 7.

Romans 7 has a very important part to play. May God give us understanding. May we put aside all our preconceived ideas and be honest with the passage. And may the truth set us free is my

prayer in Jesus' name.

Chapter 20

O Wretched Man

(Romans 7:14-25)

In this study we'll be talking about whether Paul in Romans 7 was referring to the pre-converted Christian or the post-converted. In other words, is he talking about the believer or the unbeliever? Then, in our next study, we'll deal with Romans 8:1-3, one of the key passages in the New Testament that deals with the human nature of Christ, and that's a big issue.

I'm convinced that the reason there is so much controversy over this passage is because the devil knows that these passages are crucial to an understanding of the gospel, and especially the doctrine of righteousness by faith. And when a pastor refuses to touch these passages, the devil is rejoicing. But I am not going to leave these passages alone because I know what it meant to my ministry and to my Christian life and I want the

same thing to happen to you.

But I would like to request something from you. I want you to put aside all your preconceived ideas, because they are the greatest hindrance to an understanding of the truth. I want to read you a statement that Ellen G. White made to the brethren when we as a church struggled over the 1888 Message. It's found in the Review and Herald, 10 June 1890:

“It is not for us to bring the word of God to our feelings and ideas...”

We have a special word in theology for this; we call it eisegesis (in other words, to put into a text what we want it to say). I'm afraid that problem still exists today.

“...but we are to bring our feelings and ideas to the Word of God.”

In other words, what she's saying is that we must allow the Word of God to control our ideas.

Then she quotes that statement:

“To the law and to the testimony, if they do not preach according to the word, it’s because there is no light in them.”

So our concern for today and our next study is to ask ourselves, “What exactly is Paul trying to say here, in Romans 7:14-22?”

As I mentioned when we first began Romans 7 three studies ago, the issue of this passage we’re covering today is, “Is Paul talking about the believer or the unbeliever?” If you look at verse 14, because that’s the key statement in this passage, Paul says that:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

That word, “I,” the personal pronoun, appears 25 times in this passage of verses 14 to 25 of Romans 7. Twenty-five times! The impression one gets is that Paul is talking about himself. I mean,

that is the understanding we would get in English. But, please remember, Paul wrote this in Greek, and he had a Middle-Eastern mind. He was not referring to himself. Look at the statement in verse 14. He says:

I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

Is this true only of Paul, or is this true of mankind? He has already told us in Romans 3:9 and 21 that the whole world is under sin, the whole world is under law, and, therefore, the whole world is guilty before God under the law.

So the “I” doesn’t refer to Paul as an individual. He uses the word “I” to refer to corporate man. In other words, he’s using the word “I” in a generic sense. What Paul is saying is, “This is true of every human being who tries to live the life of the law INDEPENDENT of God.” Why? Because the law is spiritual and I am unspiritual (or “carnal”) and these two cannot conform. The flesh cannot conform to the law in and of itself. Therefore, the issue is not whether

Paul is talking about the believer or the unbeliever.

Let me quickly remind you of what I said in the previous study. Romans 7:14-25 has divided the Christian church from almost Apostolic times. You have men like Origen, who died in about 254 A.D. You have men like John Wesley, the great English Reformer of the 18th century; Weiss, the German scholar; Moffat; C.H. Dodd, the British scholar — all of these men have taken the position that Paul is referring here to his pre-converted experience. On the other side, you have Augustine, Luther, Calvin, the great Swedish theologian Nygren, and the British scholar John Stott, who take the position, “No, Paul is talking about his converted experience.” But modern research is coming to the conclusion more and more that Paul is speaking of neither the converted nor the unconverted. He has one thing in mind: the person who tries to live a good life independent of God. And that can apply to the believer or the unbeliever.

To understand this passage, we must keep in

mind the key passage of Romans 7, and that is the first six verses. What is Romans 7 all about? We must keep the concept, the main theme of Romans 7 in mind to understand this passage. What is the main theme? “We Christians have been delivered, liberated from under the jurisdiction of the law.” Look at Romans 7:4:

So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ....

Then in Romans 7:6:

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Paul is telling us that, as Christians, we are no longer under the jurisdiction of the law. And remember, when we dealt with this passage we saw that the law Paul had primarily in mind was the moral law, because in verse 7 he says that it was the law that told him he was a sinner, because he

did not know what real sin was until he heard the law say, “Do not covet.” That is the moral law. But, of course, Paul, being a Jew, he had the whole law system in mind, but, primarily, the moral law.

But what does it mean to be released from the law? It means that a Christian is no longer depending on his performance in regards to the law for salvation. He is not dealing here with Christian living; Paul is going to lay the foundation here for Christian living. Chapter 8 is the life through the Spirit. But if you don't understand Romans 7, Christian living will become meaningless, or will become futile, will become a struggle without hope and without peace.

In verses 7 to 13 Paul explains that the problem under law was not the law. The law is holy, it is good, it is spiritual. The problem is me. I am “unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.” What he does in verses 15 to 25 is prove that a holy law and sinful flesh are always incompatible. Whether it's before conversion or after conversion, the two will never be able to live in harmony.

Please remember that there is no change that takes place to your nature when you experience the new birth. There is a change in your mind, in your attitude, you have experienced the new birth. But there is no change to your nature. The nature of a believer and the nature of an unbeliever are identical. That is why, when we come to Romans 8:22-23, Paul is saying that we have been “groaning ... as we wait ... the redemption of our bodies.”

We as Christians are saved, but our nature has not yet been redeemed. We have to wait until the second coming of Christ “when the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality” [1 Corinthians 15:54], then we shall be free from this sinful nature which is a struggle to live the Christian life. So keep that in mind.

Now I want to look at some key statements in Romans 7:14-25. He has made the statement in verse 14 that the law is spiritual and he — or man

— is unspiritual. Then he says that this is what happens when you put the two together: you may choose to do good, you may choose to keep the law, but how to perform it, you cannot find that. That is what his argument is. Romans 7:15-16:

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.

Please notice, there is a conflict here between my mind, which wants to do good, my will, which has chosen to do right, and my nature, which will not comply.

If you haven't had this struggle, you better question your conversion. Because I believe — if I had a choice — that Paul had the believer in mind. But I believe that is true of either the believer or the unbeliever. The reasons why I believe that Paul had the believer in mind (and I gave the reasons before) are at least four reasons because:

1. Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 of Romans are dealing with the Christian, not with the pre-converted man.

2. Beginning in verse 14, Paul moves from the past tense, which he has been using in verses 7 to 13, to the present continuous tense, which means he is not referring to a past experience but to a present issue.

3. In Romans 7:22 he makes this statement:

For in my inner being I delight in God's law.

There are two things I would like to say about this verse 22.

a. First, his phrase "inward man" or "inner being" is a phrase Paul will use only to the believer. For example, let me give you a couple of incidents. Turn to 2 Corinthians 4:16 and you will find that Paul is talking here about the believer when he uses that phrase "inward man" or the "inner man" or

the “inner mind”:

Therefore we [believers] do not lose heart. Though outwardly [i.e., the flesh, the body] we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

You see, he’s talking about the converted mind. If you turn to Ephesians 3:16, you have the same idea there. Paul will never use that phrase for the unbeliever, he will use it only for the believer. Ephesians 3:16:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you [i.e., the Christians of Ephesus] with power through his Spirit in your inner being....

- b. Secondly, if you look at Ephesians 2:3, Paul will tell us there that the mind and the flesh of the unbeliever are in harmony with sin:

...gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts....

That is the pre-converted man. But when it comes to the believer, his mind has been turned towards God. He has a renewed mind. And that is what the Greek word “repentance” means: a change of mind. But his flesh is unchangeable. That is what Jesus tried to convince Nicodemus in John 3:6 where He said:

Flesh gives birth to flesh....

You cannot change the flesh. The only time the flesh will change is at the second coming of Christ. So Paul here is obviously referring to the believer.

4. I want to give you one more argument. There are statements that Paul makes in his epistles (he wrote almost half of the New Testament) where he does touch on his preconverted experience. Galatians 1:14 is an example:

I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews

of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Or another good example is Philippians 3:6. Wherever he talks about his preconverted experience as a Pharisee, he mentions nothing about a struggle. For example, Philippians 3:6 he says:

...As for legalistic righteousness, [I was] faultless.

There's no mention of a struggle. Only as a Christian does he talk about the struggle. He does it in Romans 8:3, he does it in Galatians 5:17 — the struggle between flesh and Spirit. Galatians 5:17:

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

But I want you to notice that Romans 7:14-25

is not the end of the Christian experience. The real experience of a Christian should be Romans 8, “Life Through the Spirit.” But, to prepare us for that life through the Spirit, he has to do something that is extremely important, and that is: destroy in the believer every confidence that you may have, or that you may cling to, in your natural ability. Because the gospel formula, whether you talk in terms of imputed or imparted righteousness, is always the same: “Not I, but Christ.” And the hardest part is the “not I.”

He wants to make it very clear, because he goes on to say that “we know” and that is the conclusion he wants you to come to, that’s in verse 18, “I know.” What is it that we should know? Romans 7:18:

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

He doesn’t say, “I am partially bad” or “I’m 80 percent bad” or even 99 percent bad. Nothing

good lives in me. And the greatest evidence is that, even though I choose to do right, I cannot perform it.

Now I want to go to that very next point, which is very important. I want you to let Paul speak. The reason why the flesh [or our sinful nature] is incapable of conforming to the law is because it has something in it that makes it impossible. I want you to notice how Paul addresses the problem. He doesn't call that "a bent towards sinning." He doesn't call it "an inclination" or "a propensity." He calls it, "sin dwelling in me." Look at Romans 7:17:

As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

He calls it sin. I'm not calling it sin, Paul calls it sin. Please don't tell me he was off his mind when he wrote Romans 7. He was in his full senses. Look at verse 20, he repeats it:

Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no

longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

Let's read verse 22 with verse 23 to get the context. Romans 7:22:

For in my inner being I delight in God's law....

My mind, which has surrendered to the gospel, which has accepted Christ, loves the law, wants to keep the law, has chosen to keep the law. Romans 7:23:

...But I see another law [another force, another principle] at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.

Folks, sin is not only what you do, but sin is what you have in you, what you are. But I have some good news for you: there is no condemnation for those of you who are in Christ Jesus. And that's our next study, Romans 8:1. That statement,

Romans 8:1, is made in the context not of “sins” plural, but of “sin” dwelling in you.

The reason why I’m emphasizing this is because I want to make something very clear which is the plain teaching of the New Testament. Even if God were to give you total victory over sins — and I believe He can do that — you are still a sinner because your nature doesn’t change in sanctification. All that changes is your character. Therefore, you’re still a sinner and your only hope is the umbrella of justification by faith.

Now I want to make it very clear, and I want to go on record, that I am a great believer in sanctification. Anyone who accuses me of not teaching sanctification needs their ears hosed out with pressure water. I believe in sanctification, BUT I am like a farmer who’s trying to grow apples. When you try to grow apples, where do you concentrate on, the fruit or the tree? The tree. The fruit becomes natural if the tree is right. And the tree in Christianity, the tree in the gospel, is justification. The fruit is sanctification. That’s

how even Ellen G. White defines the 1888 message. She called it “justification by faith, whose fruits are holiness of living.”

And if you have the tree wrong, I don't care how long you spend or how much time you hash and you preach and you proclaim sanctification, if the tree is wrong, I can guarantee you that the fruit will be wrong. It becomes a futile, frustrating experience for the pastor to produce works out of his congregation when the tree is wrong. It's absolutely futile.

I am convinced that where we have gone wrong as a people is in the tree. I'm spending much time on the tree because I know, when the tree is right, when you have finally come to the point, “Not I, but Christ,” the fruits will come, and the earth will be lighted with His glory.

Because when God looks at Christian living, He does not look at Christian living like man does. Man looks at the outward performance. God looks at the motivation, at the heart. You cannot have

the right motivation if you are still under guilt, and insecurity, and living in fear whether you'll make it to heaven or not. It's impossible, it's part of the law of nature.

That is why Paul wants to destroy any idea that you can make yourself acceptable before God, or improve your standing before God, by your performance. Salvation is totally of God; it's a gift. Yes, everything else in this world we have to work for, but, thank God, salvation is a gift! That is the Biblical teaching.

Paul is saying there is sin dwelling in you. It is not an act, it is a force. He calls it a law, a principle, which you and I even with our willpower cannot conquer. Yes, we can defy it for a few moments, for a few days, maybe for a few months depending how strong a willpower you have, but you cannot conquer the law of sin. It is because of this Paul cries out in Romans 7:24:

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me [not from sins but] from this body of death?

Now I want to expose you to something that you may not have noticed: the word “wretched” there. Look at it in verse 24. Do you know that that word appears only twice in the whole of the New Testament, at least in the original? Some English translations may have it more than twice, but in the original it appears only twice. And each time it is used in an opposite sense.

In Romans 7:24, Paul is talking about the person, which includes himself, who has discovered that in him there is nothing good. So he cries, “What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body that has dwelling in it the law of sin which one day will take me to death? Who will deliver me? O wretched man that I am.”

Do you know where the same word is found? Have you ever discovered where the other word is found? It’s in the book of Revelation, chapter 3 and verse 17. There it isn’t Paul speaking, it is Christ speaking to a group of people called the Laodiceans. Now I won’t have to define who they

are, I think you know who they are. These Laodiceans are saying to themselves, and about themselves, “We are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.”

But, the True Witness, Christ, says, “You do not know, that’s your problem. Your problem is subconscious. You do not know.” And what is it that you do not know? “That you are wretched.” Revelation 3:17:

You say, “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.” But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

That’s the second time. If we knew, there would be hope, but the trouble is we do not know.

Do we have to learn it the hard way, like Peter? [See Mark 14:27-31 and Mark 14:66-72.] Jesus said to the disciples, “You will all forsake me.”

Peter said, “Yes, you may be right about these other fellows, but you are wrong about me. I will

die for you!”

He did not know; he was sincere. The issue is not sincerity; the issue is: he did not know that there was nothing good in him, that he was incapable of keeping, of fulfilling that desire. He really meant what he said, but he did not know that there was a law of sin in him which made it impossible to carry out that resolution. So, when the test came, he denied his Lord — not once, not twice, but three times. And the third time he did it with cursing and swearing, which to the Jew was an unpardonable sin.

Do we have to go that Peter experience for us to say with Paul, “O wretched man that I am”? But I’ll tell you, folks, if you do not come to that position, in you heart — I don’t mean speaking out with your mouth, because it’s easy to say, “I’m wretched,” but in your heart say, “I’m not too bad” — can you say from the heart, “O wretched man that I am”? If you cannot, you cannot say what Paul says in Romans 7:25:

Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!

That is the whole purpose of Romans 7: to destroy whatever confidence we may cling to in ourselves, so that we can say, “Not I, but I thank God for Jesus Christ.”

Those who teach that we are justified by Christ alone, but that we are sanctified by Christ plus me, need to read Paul, need to wrestle with this passage. Because all through Paul’s writings, from beginning to end, he says, “my part is faith, God’s part is righteousness.”

And now we conclude Romans 7. I want you to notice the conclusion. He says, “So then, this is the truth about me apart from Christ. This is my position if I try to live independent of Christ” [the end of Romans 7:25]:

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Now the word, “I myself” in the Greek is “ego.” But Paul did not use simply the word “ego,” he used another word, “autos ego,” which is much more emphatic than the English brings out. It means, “Left to my own, in and of myself, apart from Christ.” Whether before or after conversion it doesn’t matter, apart from Christ I am totally incapable of keeping the law in practice, because my flesh will only serve the law of sin, my human body will only serve the law of sin. I can only keep the law in terms of desiring to keep it, delighting in it, and wanting to keep it, and choosing to keep it. But in actual practice, I myself, left on my own, cannot keep it.

But we will discover when we go to Romans 8 that the righteousness of the law can be fulfilled in us if we walk no longer in the flesh, in our own strength, but in the Spirit. And that’s the glorious picture of Romans 8.

But before we can go to Romans 8, I want to ask you one question: Have you come to the

conclusion that the great Apostle Paul came to, have you come to the position that “there is nothing good dwelling in me?” Are you willing to say with Paul, “All those things that I have achieved, ever since I was a Christian, all those things that I thought would improve my standing before God, I am now willing to count it but dung and throw it away into the garbage pit, that I may find Christ, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which comes through faith, the righteousness of God, which is mine, made effective only by faith alone.”

My prayer is that you will wrestle with Romans 7 and realize that Paul is talking about you, about me, and saying, “Look fellows, if you want Christ to be your Righteousness, you have to say good-bye to all your confidence in yourself, and let Christ be your Righteousness.”

I hope that this will be true. And when we take that position, I can assure you, we won't have to promote for things. As we walk in the spirit, the desire to live for self will go — not only the

confidence, but the desire — and we will live for Christ. It is my prayer that our young people will say that “Christianity is not dos and don’ts, but Christianity is Jesus Christ. He’s everything to me.”

May God bless us as we wrestle with Romans 8 in the next study. It’s dealing with a very difficult area; I want you to wrestle with it and look at what Paul is trying to say. Because we have a Savior Who doesn’t only redeem us from our sins — thank God for that — He also delivers us from sin that dwells in me. We have a complete Savior in Jesus Christ. And that’s the Savior I want to present to you. May God bless you.

Chapter 21

The Truth as It is in Christ

(Romans 8:1-3)

Romans 8:1-3 has generated a lot of heat, both within the Christian church and within our own. Therefore, before I tackle it, I'd like to lay down some certain groundwork so that this passage becomes meaningful.

Not too long ago, Ministry Magazine came out with two articles, both written by Adventist scholars, both dealing with the subject of Romans, the human nature of Christ. The one by Dr. Herbert Douglas presented the post-fall position; that is, Christ took the nature of man after the fall of Adam, that is, like our sinful nature. The other article, by Dr. Norman Gulley, presented the pre-fall nature of Christ; that is, He took the nature of Adam before the fall.

A few months after these articles appeared, I

happened to meet with Elder Bob Spangler, the editor of Ministry Magazine. I asked him a question, “Did you have any reaction to these two articles?”

He said, “Did I! I was inundated with letters from both camps.” In fact, he felt that he had received more letters over these two articles than over any other article that had appeared in the magazine while he had been editor. In fact, he said that some of the letters were so angry, so bad, that it almost caused him to cry, that Christians could write such nasty letters. You see, the humanity of Christ is one of those hotly debated issues in the issue of Righteousness by Faith. And Romans 8:3 is one of those texts that has generated much heat:

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man....

Now, before we tackle this, I would like to say

a few things about the subject. The first thing I would like you to look at is a statement by E.G. White, of which I think I we need to take note. 7BC 904,905 taken from manuscript 67 published in 1898, we have the subheading, “The Most Marvelous Thing in Earth or Heaven.”

“When we want a deep problem to study, let us fix our minds on the most marvelous thing that ever took place in earth or heaven, the incarnation of the Son of God.”

Then, a few lines below she says:

“The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden-linked chain which binds our souls to Christ, and through Christ to God.

“This is to be our study. Christ was a real man and He gave proof of His humility in becoming a man. He was God in the flesh. When we approach the subject of Christ’s divinity clothed with the garb of humanity, we may appropriately heed the words spoken by Christ to Moses at the burning

bush, ‘Put off thy shoes from off thy feet.’”

Please, don’t take that literally, but let us come humbly, for the place we’re in, the subject we are going to discuss, is holy ground.

“We must come to the study of this subject with the humility of a learner and with a contrite heart. The study of the incarnation of Christ is a fruitful field and will repay the searcher who digs deep for hidden truth.”

There are four things we need to look at as we study this quotation:

1. The incarnation of Christ is a deep study. It will tax your mind to the fullest, but, please note, it is the most marvelous thing that ever happened on earth or in heaven.
2. I want you to take note that the humanity of Christ is everything to us. Please don’t ask me, “Why do we need to study this? Is it important to our salvation?” Yes, folks, it is

vitaly important to our salvation, both in terms of justification as well as sanctification, as we shall see in a moment.

3. The third thing we can take note of in this quotation is that we must approach this study with reverence and humility, willing to learn. What you think and what I think doesn't matter. What the Word teaches is what matters.
4. Finally, this study is fruitful and will repay those who dig deeply.

But nowhere in this statement or anywhere else do we find that this is an issue that we must fight over, so I would like to suggest a policy that I normally use myself. I would like to suggest that you use it, too. In every church, in every denomination, the teachings of a church may be put into three categories:

1. We have the fundamentals, we call it the fundamental beliefs. (A book on these has

come out, The 27 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.)

2. Then you have nonfundamental beliefs.
3. And lastly, there are teachings of the church which are considered nonessential.

Here is the policy. In fundamental beliefs, we must be united. If we are not united in fundamental beliefs, the church is in a problem. In nonfundamentals, we must have charity. We must respect each other. In nonessential, there must be liberty.

Now irrespective of what you think or what I think of the human nature of Christ, the denomination looks at which nature he took as a nonfundamental belief and, therefore, allows both views to be taught. That is why there were two articles presenting each different view. We need to learn to respect each other, for in nonfundamental beliefs, each one must be persuaded in his own mind, between him and God. We won't solve any

problems, we won't receive any blessings when we fight.

I want to give you an illustration. When the Pacific Press moved to Idaho, where I was pastoring, the following year the nominating committee and the church voted one of the top leaders of that Press to be the head elder of our church. He was a very fine, godly, dedicated Christian, but we did not see eye-to-eye on this subject. He was the head elder, I was the pastor. What was I to do? Well, I never condemned him. I respected him. He was a fine Christian and we got along very well. We worked together, we became friends.

Then one day I said, "Can we sit down, when we have some time and compare notes? I'll respect your position. You respect mine. Tell me where I'm wrong, I'll tell you where I see a problem in your position and let's try and study together."

He said, "Fine. Let's work together." So we began studying. I gave him material to read, he

gave me some and we kept comparing notes, looking at the weaknesses of each area. Well, thank God, a year later he said he was willing to change. But what I want to impress on you, folks, is that if I began by condemning him, we would have gotten nowhere. You see, when we condemn each other on nonfundamental beliefs, when we become intolerant of each other, it is a sign of legalism. Legalists don't like to tolerate different views. We need to respect each others' views. So I want you to be clear that if there are some of you, and I know there are, who belong to the opposite camp to where I stand, I'll respect you. But please, be honest with the Word of God. Your conscience must never be against the will of God. Study, wrestle with this issue, it is important. But let us learn to respect each other.

Having said this, I would like to answer two important questions that we must answer when we are dealing with this subject and which are vital to Romans 8:1-3. The first question is, "Why? Why did Christ become a man? What was God's purpose in sending His Son in human flesh? Why

was ‘the Word made flesh and dwelt among us’? Why?” Now, that’s an important question. It is, in fact, at the heart of true Christology. Because, you see, Christ became a man not because He wanted to visit this earth. He didn’t need to become a man to visit this earth. There was a reason. What was that reason? Within Adventism there are three answers:

1. Some teach that He became a man to prove that man can keep the law. Some say, as God created him; some say in his fallen condition with the help of the Holy Spirit. But the primary reason He became a man is to prove that the law can be kept.

Now it is true: the fact that Christ actually kept the law in His humanity proves that the law can be kept by man. But nowhere in scripture do I find that this is the reason why He became man. In other words, that is not the primary reason why he became man. You won’t find that in the Bible.

Now some of you may quote to me E.G. White,

so I want to say something about that. Now please don't misunderstand me. In 1980, I was discussing this with Walter Martin, the expert on the cults. He came to Nairobi, Kenya, and he made a statement which I believe is true. He said, "If E.G. White were to rise from the dead she would be horrified at the way your church has used her after her death."

Because when she was alive there were many theological problems. There was the issue of the "daily" in Daniel 7 and 8, there was the problem with the 144,000, there were many other theological problems. Never did she ever allow her writings to be used to solve those problems. She always told the brethren, "Go to Scripture," because the fundamental belief of the Adventist church is that the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the only rule of faith and practice. And, please remember, the message God has given us is for the world. When you preach the gospel to the world, the only book we can use is the Bible. But, as I read the Bible, I don't find it saying that Christ became a man to prove anything.

2. The second answer is that He became a man to be our example.

Does the Bible teach this? Yes. Let me give you a couple of texts. Turn to 1 Peter 2:21. Peter uses Christ as an example of how we Christians should suffer when we are mistreated and falsely accused, that we should not fight back, that we should suffer as Christ did. There He gives Christ as an example. In 1 Peter 2:21, Peter says:

To this you [believers] were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

You have the same idea in Philippians 2:5-8, where Paul is admonishing believers to have the humility of Christ. In Verse 5 he says:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus....

Then he talks of the self-emptying of Christ in

verses 6-8:

...Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!

But whenever the Bible talks of Christ as an example, it only uses him as an example to believers who have already accepted Christ and who stand justified by faith. But when the Bible talks of Christ's humanity in terms of the world, it never uses Christ as an example. Christ is not an example to all men. He is only an example to the born-again Christian.

Those who emphasize the "example" position, those who put the emphasis there, have often been accused, and to a large degree rightly so, of legalism or perfectionism. Because the "example theory of the atonement," which is a theological

teaching among certain theologians, is a heresy because it presents Christ as an example in terms of our salvation. In other words, we must follow his example in order to be saved and that's legalism. That is why I would like to emphasize that "Christ our example" is not the primary purpose of Christ taking humanity. It is the secondary purpose, but not the primary.

3. This brings us to the third answer. Christ became a man primarily, number one, that He might save fallen man.

Jesus himself said [Luke 19:10]:

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

When the angel told Joseph about the conception that Mary had just experienced, the angel instructed Joseph, in Matthew 1:21, that when this boy is born:

...You are to give him the name Jesus, because

he will save his people from their sins.

In Galatians 4:4 and 5, Paul tells us:

But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

In Hebrews 2:14-17, we are told that Christ partook in, or shared, our humanity that he might save us from death and the fear of death:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he [Christ] too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

So the primary reason, at the very heart of Christology, is Christ became a man in order to be the Savior of the world. And to those who believe he says, “Now, I want you to use me as an example.”

Once we establish this, we come to the next question and that is, “How did His humanity save us?” We have established the fact that he became a man to be the Redeemer of the world. The question is, “How did that humanity save us?” This is also a very important question, and within Adventism we have two answers. We are not agreed on how he saved us.

One camp says he saved us “vicariously.” The other camp says he saved us “actually.” Now, because each camp takes a different position on the human nature of Christ, what do these two positions mean? Those who teach the vicarious position teach that Christ had to take the sinless nature of Adam before the fall.

The word vicarious means “a person who functions instead of another.” This is their argument. They say that, “Sin is a dual problem. Sin is what I am and sin is what I do. I’m a sinner by nature.” (We touched on this last study where Paul teaches in Romans 7 that there is sin dwelling in our very members, in our nature, in verse 17, verse 20, verse 23. He calls it the law of sin and death.)

But sin is also performance and Christ had to save me both from what I am and from my failures. How did He do it? “It is very simple,” they say. “He took the sinless nature of Adam to substitute, to be in place of, the sinful nature of man. So His sinless nature saves us from our sinful nature. And His sinless performance, which is his doing and dying, saves us from our sinful performance. Thus, His sinless nature plus His sinless performance together give us salvation full and complete. Christ is the perfect Redeemer.”

Sounds good! Sounds wonderful! Sounds convincing! But there is one major problem. In

fact, there are two problems, but one major one: this makes the gospel unethical. You see, it is perfectly acceptable to have substitutes in football and basketball and, in the teaching profession, we have substitute teachers. It is even acceptable that we have substitute foods, like substitute meats from Loma Linda and Worthington. That's a substitute. It is in place of the real stuff. Now, it's a poor imitation but it's still a substitute.

But when you apply this definition of substitution, somebody who functions instead of somebody else, legally you face an ethical problem. Because it's a fundamental principle of all law, God's or man's, that you cannot allow an innocent person to suffer in the place of a guilty person. No law will allow that. No judge would be legally right to allow [serial murderer] Ted Bundy's mother to suffer the death sentence for her son no matter how much she wanted to, because it is unethical.

Now when God established Israel as a Theocracy, He made it very clear in Deuteronomy

24:16 that you cannot transfer guilt and punishment:

Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.

He made a law and, in fact, He wanted to see the law carried out. Look at 2 Kings 14:6:

Yet he did not put the sons of the assassins to death, in accordance with what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses where the Lord commanded: “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sins.”

You will notice how this law was fulfilled. And when Israel departed from this principle and began transferring guilt and punishment, God came down hard on them through Ezekiel the prophet. In Ezekiel 18:5-20 you will see how God comes down hard on people who transfer guilt.

Therefore, if God made it clear that you cannot transfer guilt and punishment — an innocent man cannot suffer in the place of a guilty man — then the vicarious position becomes unethical. And, because it is unethical, those who preach this position, like the Reformers, were accused of “legal fiction” or, “as if passed on righteousness.”

Today the same view is condemned by Muslim scholars who say that this teaching makes Christianity the most unethical religion in the world. The vicarious position has that major problem.

It has a second problem. If Christ did not have to become “me” to identify himself with me, to be my Savior, then obviously I don’t have to identify myself with Him to be saved. All I have to do is simply accept, simply believe (and the word “believe” is understood as a mental assent to truth), simply say “yes” and Heaven is mine. But genuine faith, as we saw already, demands identification with Christ. His death is our death. His life is our life. His burial is our burial. Paul, in Romans 6:5,

will use the same word as he uses in Romans 8:3:

If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

(Our resurrection will be real because His resurrection was real.) The result is, if you don't identify yourself with Christ, you end up with what is called cheap grace. "He did it all. I'm saved. Praise the Lord. I can do what I like." True salvation, true gospel, true justification by faith won't allow that.

What about those who say He actually saved us? What do they mean by that? Well, they say that Christ could not save us until first He qualified to be our Savior. How did He qualify? He took unto Himself the humanity that needed redeeming, the humanity that stood condemned. He took it unto Himself so that He may redeem it; not in place of it, but to redeem it itself.

So when Christ assumed our corporate

humanity that needed redeeming, He qualified to be the second Adam, the Savior of the world. Then, by His doing and by His dying, He not only provided salvation, He actually changed the history of mankind in Himself. And that, by the way, is the message of Romans 8:1-3. We have a new history in Christ, a new identity, a new position. There we stand perfect in Christ, we stand reconciled, we stand legally justified. It was not just a provision, it was an actual salvation for all man. That is the good news of the gospel.

Now, with this background let's go now to Romans 8. Now I know the big issue is over the word "likeness." The Greek word for "likeness" can mean "resemble" or it can mean "similar," and Paul will use it in both ways, in Romans, and also in other passages. We cannot find out the true meaning of "likeness" in Romans 8 simply by making a word study. We have to look at it in its context. And I would say that we have been so bogged down with that one word, "likeness" in verse 3, that we forget the entire meaning of the whole passage that Paul is trying to convey.

So instead of being bogged down with the word “likeness,” I would like to read for you a very reliable and a very good commentary by a group of scholars under the editorship of Cranfield, none of whom were Seventh-day Adventists but who are fine Biblical scholars. The commentary is the International Critical Commentary, the 1982 edition, by Cranfield. Here’s that part which is pertinent:

“By sinful flesh [this is referring to Romans 8:3], Paul clearly meant sinful flesh, that is, fallen human nature. But why did he say in “likeness” of sinful flesh rather than just “in sinful flesh”? At any rate, there are five alternative solutions to this problem.”

Now I won’t read you all five, because three of them are very liberal positions, but I will review two of them, both taught within our church. Those who teach the vicarious position and say that Christ took the pre-fall nature of Adam use the argument of number two. Here it is:

“Paul introduced ‘likeness’ in order to avoid implying that the Son of God assumed fallen human nature. The sense being, ‘like our fallen flesh, because really flesh, but only like and not identical with it, because unfallen.’ This, though it is the traditional solution [i.e. the evangelical church teaches this], is open to the general theological objection that it was not unfallen but fallen human nature which needed redeeming.”

In other words, if Christ came to save fallen man, it becomes senseless that He took unfallen human nature.

Here is the fifth argument which is the second argument taught within our church, taught by the actual people who take the position that Christ assumed our fallen nature:

“That the intention being the use of ‘likeness’ here was to take account of the fact that the Son of God was not in being sent by His Father changed into a man, but rather assumed human nature while

still remaining Himself.”

That is, Divinity did not become humanity, Divinity took unto Itself humanity, but Christ was still God. The quote continues:

“On this view the word “likeness” does have its sense of “likeness” but the intention is not in any way to call in question or to water down the reality of Christ’s sinful flesh, but to draw attention to the fact that while the Son of God truly assumed sinful flesh, He never became sinful flesh and nothing more, nor even sinful flesh indwelt by the Holy Spirit [which is what believers are] and nothing more. But He always remained Himself.”

In other words, God, His divinity, never changed. It remained divinity or, to use the words of E.G. White, she puts it very nicely:

“He took upon his sinless divine nature our sinful nature.” (MM 181)

And then it begins to critique each of these

positions, and I'll read what it says about position number two:

“We have already indicated the serious theological objection which lies against number two position.”

That objection was that Christ came to save fallen man and not unfallen man. Then, regarding five, which is the fallen position:

“We conclude that position number five is to be accepted as the most probable explanation of Paul's use of the word “likeness,” and understand Paul's thought to be that the Son of God assumed the self same fallen human nature that is ours; but that in His case, that fallen human nature was never the whole of Him. He never ceased to be the Eternal Son of God.”

“If we recognize that Paul had this in mind and believe that it was fallen human nature which the Son of God assumed, we shall probably be inclined to see here also a reference to the unintermittent

warfare [the constant warfare that Jesus Christ battled His whole earthly life] by which He forced our rebellious nature [i.e., our sinful nature] to render a perfect obedience to God.”

Then they quote the neo-orthodox scholar, Karl Barth:

“Those who believe that it was fallen human nature which was assumed have even more cause than that of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism to see the whole of Christ’s life on earth as having redemptive significance; for in this view Christ’s life before his actual ministry and death, was not just a standing where unfallen Adam had stood, without yielding to the temptation to which Adam succumbed, but a matter of starting from where we start, subject to all the evil pressures which we inherit and using the altogether unpromising and unsuitable material of our corrupt nature to work out a perfect sinless obedience.”

This, by the way, was the 1888 message. Today scholars — non-adventist scholars — are

preaching it. Don't ever tell me that there are no scholars that back this position. I have just read to you from one of the top commentaries of the Christian church. The International Critical Commentary takes the position that Christ took the fallen nature. But now let's look at the context. Romans 8:1:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....

The word "therefore" immediately tells me that this verse is connected with the previous statements that Paul made. What did Paul say previously to verse 1 of chapter 8? Remember, there were no chapter and verse divisions when Paul wrote. What is he saying? He has just told us in Romans 7:14-25 that there is a problem in his life, a problem in every human life. And that is: sin dwells in us. The law of sin is in our members. And in Romans 7:24 he cries out in desperation:

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

I have a body that stands condemned to death because it has sin dwelling in it. Who will deliver me not from my sin, my acts, but from what I am? That is the issue. I want you to know his answer, Romans 7:25:

Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Now he didn't explain any further there. He goes to Romans 8 to explain what he means by, "Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!" In view of this, he says:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....

Do you still have sin dwelling in your members? I'm not talking about performance, I'm talking of sin dwelling in you, in your members. The answer is "yes," because Christians still have sinful flesh. Do you stand condemned? Not in Christ; there is no condemnation for those in

Christ.

Now I would like to say for those of you who have the King James version of the Bible, because you will notice, those of you who have a modern translation like the NIV, Good News Bible, or any contemporary version, the second half of verse one from the King James is not there:

...who do walk not according to the flesh [the sinful nature], but according to the Spirit.

The most reliable manuscripts do not have that second part. I am convinced this is a scribal addition, not mainly because of the textual fact but because if Paul put that statement there in verse 1, he would be contradicting his own theology. Because he would be saying that we are justified because we are doing something, we are walking in the Spirit. He would be making sanctification the means of justification, which Paul condemned.

Yes, sanctification is the fruit of justification, never the means. That part, “walking in the spirit

and not in the flesh,” does belong to verse 4 but not to verse 3. All that Paul says in verse 1 is that, “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.” Why is there no condemnation for those who are in Christ? The answer is found in verse 2, because something took place in Christ. Romans 8:2:

...Because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Please notice it’s not through you, but through Christ. Now the words “set me free” are in the past historic tense, the Aorist. It’s something that has already happened in the past. I have and you have already been freed from the law of sin and death, but we have been freed in Christ. Now how could Christ free you from the law of sin and death if he did not assume the nature that had it? Then in verse 3 he goes on to say how this happened, he gives the details. Romans 8:3:

For what the law was powerless to do in that it

was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man....

The law of God could not free you from the law of sin and death, and he's already covered that in chapter 7. The flesh is incapable of keeping the law of God because it's weak. What the law could not do, God did. How did God do it? By sending His own son in a human nature that is like yours and mine.

Now please notice what he condemned. He did not condemn "sins," your performance or mine. He condemned "SIN," singular. What is Paul referring to when he uses the phrase "sin in sinful man" (or "sin in the flesh," as some translations read)? The phrase "sin in the flesh," found in verse 3, the phrase "the law of sin and death" found in verse 2, the phrase "the law of sin at work within my members" found in Romans 7:23, the phrase "sin living in me" found in Romans 7:17 and 20 are all synonymous terms. Paul is not dealing here

with our performance; he is dealing with the source of our problem, the foundation of our problem, which is sin dwelling in me.

Now, those who teach the post-fall position, to which I belong, have a problem. We must also be honest with our position. If Christ took that sinful nature which has sin dwelling in it, and which condemns me, doesn't that make Christ a sinner in need of a Savior? That's the argument of the pre-fall people. That's a valid argument.

Unfortunately, the solution that is offered to them is unacceptable. Even I won't accept it. They [the post-fall group] say that sinful nature is not sin. "Yes," they say, "we have an inclination towards sin, we have a bent toward sinning, but it is not sin."

Folks, you would have a hard time proving it from Romans 7 and from other passages. The Bible does call it sin, so that is not the solution. Sin is not a singular problem, it is a dual problem.

Then what's the solution? Well, as I read the New Testament, I discovered something, that whenever the New Testament talks about the humanity of Christ, it always uses a qualifying word. In Romans 8:3 the qualifying word is "likeness." In John 1:14 and Galatians 4:4 the word used is "made" or "to become," the Greek word "ginomai." In 2 Corinthians 5:21 you have the word "made" also, "He was made sin." In Hebrews 2:14 the qualifying word is "partake" or "share": He shared in our humanity.

In other words, what the New Testament teaches is this: in the incarnation Jesus Christ became, was made, shared, what we are, but what we are did not belong to him by native right. We must never ever teach that Christ HAD a sinful nature. That would be heresy. That would be making Him altogether like us. He ASSUMED our sinful nature. He TOOK upon Himself what belongs to us, not to Him.

Now it is true that if Christ consented to the sinful desires of that nature, if He yielded to that

nature even by a thought, He would have become a sinner in need of a redeemer. But as long as He would not allow that nature to control Him or to express itself in Him, He was not a sinner. He was made sin, He was made flesh, but He was not sin. In other words, we must never drag the will of Christ, the mind of Christ into sin. That would be making Him a sinner. Yes, He took our nature, He struggled with our nature, but He conquered that nature and He executed that nature on the cross, and that is what verse 3 is saying. On the cross He took that nature and executed it or He allowed the executioners to execute it so that we may be set free from the law of sin and death. Now, what is our conclusion? What is the blessing of this wonderful truth? The blessing is twofold, not one, but twofold.

1. You and I are sinners, not because of our sins only, but because of what we are. I am a sinner by nature, plus I am a sinner by performance. Jesus saved me from both, not vicariously. He took my nature and He executed that nature on the cross so I'm saved from my sin.

But in that death, all my sins which that nature produced also died. When you cut down an apple tree the apples also die. Am I correct? And when He dealt with the very core of my sin problem He dealt with the other problem too, the sin. Because of this there is no condemnation, and that's the first blessing [Romans 8:1]:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....

Even if God were to give you total victory over sin, you still stand as a sinner because your nature will condemn you. But in Christ I have freedom from my nature as well as from my performance. I have a perfect Savior.

2. But that is not the only blessing that we receive, we receive a second blessing from this truth, which we will study in detail as we go along to verse 4, but I'll just review verse 4. The second blessing is this: that the righteous requirements of the law which we could not keep ourselves, might be fulfilled, are possible to be fulfilled in us who

do not walk according to the flesh (because if you walk in the flesh you will have the frustration of Romans 7), but who walk according to the Spirit.

This same Spirit that conquered the law of sin in Christ and executed the law of sin in Christ, this same Holy Spirit that produced righteousness in the humanity of Christ that is identical to ours, that same Spirit is now available to you and to me who are born-again Christians.

And as we walk in the Spirit, the righteous requirements, not some of the righteous requirements, but the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, not to justify us, but as evidence that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. So the humanity of Christ is everything.

These three verses are extremely crucial because in these verses Paul is telling me that Jesus did not only come to save me from my sins which are many, but to quote John the Baptist in John 1:29:

Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

He takes away sin, singular, the SIN of the world. He took the cause, the source of our problem and with it He took also our sins. And so in Christ, Who became one of us, we have a perfect Redeemer. We have a new history and we have a new hope. And I say praise the Lord for a Savior who came not halfway between God and man where Adam stood before the fall, but came to where I am, struggled with the struggles I am going through. So we have a Priest in heaven now who can sympathize with me and who can help me. I thank God for such a Savior. He is my elder brother. I hope He is yours, too, is my prayer in Jesus' name.

Chapter 22

Life in the Spirit

(Romans 8:4-13)

It is not until chapter 8 of Romans that Paul brings in the Holy Spirit. Have you wondered why? Is it because Paul doesn't have a high place for the Holy Spirit? Is it because the Holy Spirit is of less importance to him? The answer to those questions is a definite "No!" But, you see, Paul is a very systematic theologian and, of all his writings, Romans is his most systematic presentation of the plan of redemption. It is important that we follow his logic and his steps.

Since we've been covering this for many studies, let me put in a nutshell where he is coming from and where he is going. Having introduced himself and the purpose of writing Romans, the first thing that Paul begins with is the universal sin problem. He begins in Romans 1:18 right up to Romans 3:20, and in that section of Romans he

paints a very dark, dismal, hopeless picture of the human race, both Jews and Gentiles [meaning everyone].

Then, having destroyed any confidence his readers may have in themselves and their ability to save themselves, he introduces the gospel. To Paul the gospel is “The righteousness of God realized in the holy history of our Lord Jesus Christ.” There, in that righteousness, is man’s only hope of salvation.

He then expounds on this from every conceivable angle. He defends it, he expounds on it, he looks at it from every angle, and he comes to the clear conclusion that “not I, but Christ” is man’s only hope of standing righteous before God, both now and in the judgment.

When he has finished this, then he turns to the work of the Holy Spirit in the plan of salvation. You see, that’s very systematic. Now, why does he do that? You will notice that in Paul’s writings and in the writings of the New Testament — especially

the teachings of Jesus Himself — every member of the Godhead has a very important vital part in our salvation. If you read your New Testament you will notice God the Father is the “Chairman.” For example in John 3:16 and 17 we read:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

In Galatians 4:4 we read that:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son....

And all through the life of Christ he made it clear, “I have come to do the will of Him Who sent Me.”

The Father is the Director, the Chairman of the plan of salvation. Christ is the Savior. If you turn to Matthew 1:21, please notice the instruction that

was given to Joseph when the angel announced the birth of the Savior. In verse 21, the angel tells Joseph that Mary, whom he was to marry, will bring forth a son:

...You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

You see, the word “Jesus” means “Savior.”

What about the Holy Spirit? His work is to communicate to the human race what God has already obtained in His Son Jesus Christ, which is eternal redemption. So the Holy Spirit is the Communicator, and it is this that Paul expounds in Romans 8. The work of the Holy Spirit is not to save us but to make the salvation which has already been realized in the holy history of Christ, to make that effective, and to make it real in our experience. The work of the Holy Spirit may be divided into three stages:

1. The first stage is justification.

2. The second stage is sanctification.

3. The final, third stage is glorification.

We have spent some time already in justification. I want to simply remind you of some important facts by looking at one passage from the words of Jesus Christ. Paul has expounded on it clearly, that the Holy Spirit points us to Christ as man's only hope of salvation. But this Christ also expounded very clearly, and so turn to John 16. Jesus put in a nutshell how the legal justification which Christ already obtained on the cross is made effective in the human race. In John 16:8 Jesus described to His disciples what one of the missions of the Holy Spirit was:

When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment....

When the Holy Spirit had come, when His dispensation begins, He will convict or convince the world of three things:

1. of sin
2. of righteousness, and
3. of judgment.

John 16:9:

...In regard to sin, because men do not believe in me...

In other words, man is lost not because he's a sinner; man is lost because he's without Christ. The Holy Spirit convinces the world that without Christ there is no hope. That's what Paul has been trying to explain in the first section of Romans. The whole world is under sin, the whole world is guilty before God, man's only hope is Christ. Then, in John 16:10, Jesus goes on to explain in what sense the Holy Spirit will convict the world of righteousness:

...in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer...

What Christ meant is that God sent Him to this world to prepare righteousness for the world, and the fact that He has gone back means that His work of preparing that righteousness, of obtaining that righteousness is a finished work. He's gone back to the Father, having finished the work. In fact, one of His last prayers that He prayed, found in John 17:4, is:

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

Then, of course, John 16:11 says that the world is judged, and that if you reject that gospel, if you reject the gift of God, then you have judgment.

...and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

But what happens when a person realizes that his only hope is Christ and accepts Jesus as his personal Savior? Is the work of the Holy Spirit finished? The answer is no. Then His work is to

reproduce in the believer, who now has peace and assurance, His work is to produce in the believer the righteous character of Christ. And that is what He intends to do with each one of us who has accepted Christ as a Savior.

I want to emphasize, because of confusion, sanctification must never be taught as contributing to salvation. Our salvation is only in the history of Christ. But sanctification is extremely important because it is the fruit, it is the evidence of justification by faith.

The world today will not believe until they see. The world today has become like Thomas. He refused to believe that Christ was raised from the dead until he saw the Savior with his own eyes and put his fingers into those nail holes in his hands and side [see John 20:24-29]. The world today is living in a scientific age, and the scientific method will not allow, will not accept anything as a fact unless it is demonstrated. So sanctification has a very special significance for those of us who are today living in the last days.

But we need to know the place of sanctification. Because sanctification, at its very best, only gives us one-third of what is true of us in Christ through justification. In Christ we have three things:

1. We have a perfect character. We stand perfect in Christ in performance.
2. We stand perfect in justice in Christ. “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.” Why? Because He liberated us from that condemnation. Every sin that you have committed, and every sin that you will commit to your dying day, has already been taken care of on the cross of Christ.
3. But that is not all. We have a third wonderful blessing in Christ. We stand perfect in nature in Christ. Why? Because, as we saw when we studied the first three verses of Romans 8, He condemned the law of sin and death in His flesh. He condemned

it, He executed it.

Sanctification is the process of experiencing only the character of Christ, not the justice. Because the justice is realized only by dying the second death, and only Christ has died the second death for us.

In sanctification, no change takes place in your nature. Your nature will remain sinful as it was before your conversion, 100 percent sinful until your dying day. It is only at glorification, at the second coming of Christ when “this corruption will put on incorruption.” In fact, in Romans 8:22-25 Paul will tell us, and we’ll come to that in another study, that the whole creation, including ourselves who have received the Holy Spirit, are groaning waiting for the redemption of the body. When that happens, the struggle will be over.

In Philippians 3:20-21, Paul tells us that he is anxiously waiting for the coming of Christ — he called it the blessed hope — not because he wants to walk in golden streets and live in mansions.

That's an egocentric view of the second coming. He wants the second coming because he's tired of this sinful body. So he says, "I look forward to the second coming of Christ, that this vile, corrupt body may be transformed to be like His glorious body, which He prepared for us." Philippians 3:20-21:

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

This study, Romans 8:4-13 is dealing with the life in the Spirit, or the life led by God's Holy Spirit, which is what God intends for every Christian. The Christian life is a Spirit-led life; that's the goal. What Paul is doing here is laying the foundation for that. Then, in chapters 12, 13, 14, 15, and a part of 16, he will give us practical applications to that foundation. But right now, in this passage, he's laying the foundation. Let us

now go to the passage.

Please notice verse 4 is a continuation of verse 3. In verses 1, 2, and 3, Paul tells us that the answer to the sin problem is Jesus Christ. In Romans 7:24, at the end of his argument there, he concludes with this cry, a desperate cry for help:

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? [This body that is dominated by the law of sin and death. And his answer is...] Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Then in Romans 8, verses 1, 2, and 3 he tells us how God liberated us. The Spirit of life that was in Christ, and the law of sin and death which He assumed by taking our humanity, met in Jesus Christ, and there, Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, was victorious and He executed the law of sin and death. He did that for two reasons:

1. The first reason is in verse 1, that there may be:

...no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....

2. The second reason is in verse 4:

...In order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

What does Paul mean by the word “us”? When he spoke of the gospel, he said Christ died for all men. But when he uses the word “us” here in verse 4, he is not talking of all men, he is talking of the believer who has said in his heart, “O wretched man that I am, who will save me? I thank God through Jesus Christ.”

I am going to ask you a question: “Do you say ‘I thank God through Jesus Christ’?” I ask that question because there is another passage in the New Testament which uses the word “wretched.” By the way, let me remind you, the word

“wretched” in the original appears only twice in the whole of the New Testament. This is the first time, Romans 7:24. The second time it appears is in the Laodicean message, where Christ, the True Witness, speaks to a group of people. I won’t have to tell you who they are. He says to them, “You do not know that you are wretched.”

The day we can say, “What a wretched man I am,” we can say, “I thank God through Jesus Christ.” Because the formula of the gospel is “Not I, but Christ.”

To such a people he is talking. The “us” refers to those who have no confidence in the flesh, but are rejoicing in Christ. He is saying that if there’s a condition there for sanctification), if we walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh, the righteous requirement of the law will be fulfilled in us, and by that Paul is not referring to the mechanical obedience to the law. You don’t have to have the Spirit to mechanically obey the law. The Pharisees were experts at mechanically obeying the law.

When the Bible talks of obeying the law, when Paul talks of obeying the law, and he will bring this out in chapter 13, verse 10 especially, he will tell us that love, this unconditional agape love of God, this love is the fulfilment of the law. In other words, when we are led by the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is love and love is the fulfillment of the law. But there is a condition:

...who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

May I make it clear that the word “live,” which is the key verb in verse 4, is in the present continuous tense. So what Paul is saying here is, “The righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in we believers who continually do not live according to the sinful nature but continually live according to the Spirit.”

Now there are two words here in verse 4 that we need to be clear on: the word “flesh” [in some translations] and the word “Spirit.” What does Paul mean by those two words? We spent some

time in chapter 4 in dealing with the flesh. Because Paul asks the question:

What shall we say about Abraham pertaining to the flesh?

I made it clear then that the word flesh does not mean the soft part of your body. Some of you may have more of it than others, but that is not what Paul is talking about. What does he mean by the word flesh? He means the natural life that you and I were born with, which we received through our parents, who, in turn, received from their parents, until we come to Adam. In other words, “the flesh” refers to the sinful human nature which is ours by birth, the natural life.

What does he mean by the Spirit? He means the life of Christ which He laid down for us on the cross, and which comes into us through the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the One Who communicates the life of Christ to us.

So you have two lives, which is what makes

you different from the unbeliever. The unbeliever has only one life, the natural life. With that life he can do only two things: he can do sin and he can do self-righteousness. But in God's eyes both of those are not acceptable. For I read in Isaiah 64:6 that:

...All our righteous acts are like filthy rags....

But the life of the Spirit is something only the believer has. In fact, please look at Romans 8, verses 9 and 10:

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

You don't belong to Christ if you have not experienced the new birth. Jesus made this clear to Nicodemus. Nicodemus was trying to produce righteousness by the flesh, and Jesus said in John

3:6:

Flesh gives birth to flesh....

You can't change it! That is what the terrible thing is about legalism. Legalism is righteousness produced by the flesh. And I'll tell you what it looks like: it looks very nice outwardly, very holy outwardly, but inwardly it is full of rot.

One of my pastors in Ethiopia, a die-hard legalist who thought that I was preaching heresy, came up to me one day and said, "Can you please help me?"

He had been opposing me all this time and now he comes and says, "Will you help me?" I said, "Sure. What's your problem?"

He said, "My daughter has left the church and has joined the Pentecostal church and she has brought disgrace to my ministry. I have tried," he said, with tears in his eyes, "I have tried to put sense into her mind and she won't listen to me, but

I know she has a high regard for you. Please, can you convince her to come back to God's remnant?"

So I said, "Well, I'll try and do all I can." She was a university student, so I went to the university and visited her.

This is what she said to me. "Pastor, you want to know the truth?"

"Yes," I said. "What's the problem?"

She said, "I'll tell you. When my father comes to church, when he stands behind that pulpit, he looks like a saint. In fact, you can even see a halo over his head." (That's because he had my hairstyle [bald]. And when a light shines on my hairstyle there is a halo, but it is artificial, folks.) "But," she said, "when he's at home, he's a devil."

That's exactly what legalism does. It produces hypocrites, people who in church look like saints but at home are devils. Do you know, folks, that we have a problem in our church because of

legalism? We keep it hidden underneath but we have a problem of child and wife abuse in this denomination. It's a problem. We don't confess it publicly, but you speak with those who are working with those kids from Adventist homes, in foster homes. Why? Because legalists appear holy when they come to church, but at home they are devils.

That is why we need to understand that it is only in Christ, and as we walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh, that the life of Christ is reproduced in us. He will only do it for those who are resting in Justification by faith. Because sanctification is not the fruits of legalism; it's the fruits of justification by faith and nothing else. So it is important that we come to grips with this, and Paul will bring this out, especially in Romans 8.

But let's look at Romans 8:5. Why is it that we should "not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit"? He's told us in verse 4 that's the way, by living according to the Spirit, the righteousness of the law is reproduced in us. Then

in verse 5 he says:

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

What is he saying here? As I mentioned, the flesh [used in some translations] has to do with our sinful nature. The Spirit has to do with the life of Christ which has come into us through the Holy Spirit.

By the way, maybe before I explain verse 5, let me give you a text that puts it very nicely. Please turn to 2 Peter 1:4. Listen to how Peter puts this, because Paul is doing the same thing here and you will notice that Peter is in perfect harmony with Paul. In verse 1-3, he talks about the wonderful promises that are ours through Jesus Christ. Please remember how he addresses Christ in verse 2; he calls Christ our God and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is our Savior, that was His part of the salvation plan. But in verse 4, I read:

Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

You see, the flesh, the natural life of man, is dominated by three drives, and you'll find these three drives in 1 John 2:16:

For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.

[In some translations these three drives are called “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”]

The other day I was in a supermarket, trying to buy an oil filter for my car, and there was a lady with her son shopping, too. Everything the son saw he wanted, so he grabbed it. His mother kept reminding him, “Put it back!” But he kept on

doing it and she kept reminding him and, in the end, she couldn't take it any longer and she gave him a paddy-wack, which he needed in the first place.

Then he cried and said, "Mother, why can't I HAVE it?"

I nearly told her, "Sister, he is simply being natural." Because the flesh wants what it sees.

You know, that's one blessing we had in Africa, especially some parts of Africa. You went to the supermarket and you saw nothing but rows and rows and rows of toilet paper. My kids never said, "I want one of them."

But it is a problem in America. You see things that you have never thought of before. I was in Los Angeles, California, at the campmeeting there, and the pastor took me to what they call a price club where he was a member. They had a microwave pressure cooker. And I said, "Boy!"

The lady behind the counter said, “You can cook your food in one minute, less than half the time than the microwave itself, because you have now two things working, a microwave which is fast, and now a pressure cooker in the microwave.”

“Fantastic,” I said, “I should buy this.” Then I reminded myself: the flesh wants everything. What’s wrong with waiting one more extra minute? So I said, “No.” But, you see, that’s the flesh, it wants everything: bigger fireworks, bigger cars, bigger houses, you name it. And when you fathers buy a train set for your kids, please, it’s for you that you want it.

I was in Mexico for the first time and I saw something wonderful. I saw hammocks. I said, “I’ll buy one for my son and one for my daughter.” Guess who is enjoying it? Folks, the flesh wants everything. The lust of the flesh, and then the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life: you want to be number one.

But Paul says the mind must not be set. The

word “set,” by the way, in Romans 8:5 means “direct.” The people who are controlled by the natural life will let their minds be dominated by the flesh. Remember, your flesh, my flesh, our nature, is unchangeable until the second coming of Christ. Don’t you ever get the idea that your nature will improve as you grow older and older as a Christian. Your nature will remain flesh to your dying day. What changes is your character. The reason why it changes is because the change that has taken place in the Christian is not in his nature but in the mind.

The Greek word “metanoia,” which we have in English “repentance,” means a change of mind. Paul is saying, “Let your mind be controlled now by the Spirit and no longer by the flesh.” How do we do it? How do we direct our minds onto the things of the Spirit?

Paul gives us a help in Philippians 4:8. Here he’s simply admonishing us to walk in the Spirit, but what does that mean? It means setting your mind on the things of the Spirit. What does that

involve? Look at Philippians 4:8 where he's giving the same counsel:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.

So the question I want to ask you is, “What goes on between your ears when you are driving your car on the freeway, or when you're having your shower, when you are in those free moments and not concentrating on your work? What goes on between your ears, what do you think about? Is it about worldly things, is it about making money, is it about improving your standard of living, is it about trying to keep up with the Jones, or is about the things of God? What goes on between your ears?” That is the way to tell whether you're walking in the flesh or walking in the Spirit.

Paul does not say that the Christian walking in the flesh is lost. He does say that a person walking

in the flesh is on dangerous ground. For I read in Romans 8:6:

The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace....

The Greek actually says, “To be carnally minded leads to death.” That’s how the text is. Now what does the word “carnal” mean? The word “flesh” in Greek is “sarks.” The word Paul uses for carnal is “sarkicos,” which means “a mind controlled by the flesh” or we would say in English, “fleshly mind.” In other words, if you let your mind dwell on those three basic drives of the flesh, that is what it means to be carnally minded. If your mind is always preoccupied with the things of this world, the material things of this world, then you are walking in the flesh. And if you do that, it will lead you unto death. In other words, to be carnally minded is dangerous, because the flesh is the tool of Satan that he will use to eventually pull you out of Christ.

We had a teacher in the mission field who once told me a very interesting experience in her own life. She said when she was in college, she had one desire, and that was to be a missionary. So she got friendly with a student who was a theology major, because he had the same desire. They decided to get married even before they finished college. They married, and then, in the last year of his schooling, he changed his major from theology to engineering. They were from Colorado.

She was very disappointed that he had changed his major but he felt that he was not called to the ministry. But he was still a good Adventist, he graduated, went back to Colorado, got an excellent job, and was an active member in the church, in fact, became an elder. Sometime later his workmate said to him, “Why don’t we go out golfing?”

This man said, “I have never played golf in my life.”

He went golfing and liked it, so they went once

a week. There's nothing wrong with that. But the trouble was that he began to crave it. So they went twice a week. That was not enough, so they went three times a week. And the third time, of course, was Wednesday, so he stopped going to prayer meeting. Then he was going four times a week, and then he would come home dog tired and so Sabbath was time for lay activities, he didn't have time to go to church. So he slept on Sabbaths and very seldom came to church.

His wife saw that he was very gradually slipping away from Christ. She realized that, if this continued, he would be lost. So she went on her knees after pleading with him, "Please, don't you see what's happening to you?"

He would not listen, he would not take advice. So she finally went to the Lord, after spending three days in fasting and prayer she said, "Lord, I don't care what you do to him; please, I want him in heaven. I can see that he's slipping away from Christ. Do whatever is necessary."

She was on her knees, pleading with the Lord, and the telephone rang. It was her husband's firm. He was in a tank, welding, and there was some gas that was not removed, and he went to sleep and he died in the tank. God laid him to rest.

She believed, and I believe she's right, that God laid him to rest as the only way of resurrecting him in the kingdom. She said, "When I discovered that there was no longer any need for me to remain in Colorado, I applied for mission service." And there she was in Ethiopia.

God will do anything to save us. But the thing is this, if you keep walking in the flesh, you are following the road that leads to death. Because the flesh has no right to live. That is the clear verdict of the Bible. The only place for the flesh is the cross. And I read in Galatians 5:24:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

“But if you walk in the Spirit,” says Paul, “you have peace and you have life.” Because the life of the Spirit is a life that brings peace and it brings victory, it brings the righteousness of the law. Look at Romans 8:7:

...The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.

Our sinful natures and a holy God are not compatible. The law of God and our flesh are incompatible. We spent a whole study when we dealt with Romans 7:15-25. That is the whole emphasis of Romans 7, that your natural life and the law are incompatible. It is impossible for me, naturally, to keep the law. It’s impossible. I can keep the letter of the law, but never the Spirit. That is what Paul is saying here. Verse 8:

Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

You may please man, you may please yourself, you may please the brethren, you may please the

pastor, but you cannot please God, because God doesn't look at your acts, He looks at your heart. And only the heart that is transformed, that has repented, can be pleasing to God. But now look at verse 9:

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

Paul is saying, "If you do not have the Spirit, you may be a church member, your names may be in the books, but if you have not experienced the new birth you are none of His."

One day a Jehovah's Witness came to my house. We were discussing theology and, because I know something about the Jehovah's Witnesses, I said to her, "Do you belong to the 144,000?" They divide their members into two camps — the 144,000 who will go to heaven and who are allowed to take the Lord's Supper, and the rest who will not go to heaven but will enjoy heaven on

earth. I said to her, “Do you belong to the 144,000?”

She said, “No.”

Then I said, “According to your theology, you don’t have the Spirit.”

“That’s right, she said. “I don’t have the Spirit, only the 144,000 have the Spirit.”

Then I read her this text, and she was shocked to read that text that says that if you don’t have the Spirit you don’t belong to Christ. I said, “Take this to your brethren and have a Bible study.” If you don’t have the Spirit you are none of His. But verse 10:

But if Christ is in you...

Please notice: to Paul, the Spirit of God dwelling in you and Christ dwelling in you are synonymous because the Spirit is Christ’s representative. He is the Paraclete. He’s the One

Who is representing Christ. If he dwells in you...

...your body is dead because of sin...

In other words, you have surrendered your natural life to the cross.

...yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Can you see in verse 10 the formula, “Not I, but Christ”? There you have it. Verse 11:

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

Do you understand what Paul is saying here? Paul is saying that there are two forces in you: one is the force of the flesh, the law of sin and death; the other one is the law of Spirit and life. Which of these two are stronger, are greater? What is the power of the law of sin and death? What is the

greatest power of the flesh? It is the grave. Sin kills. If you can conquer death, you can conquer sin. No human being in and of himself has ever conquered the grave.

But there is one Man Who has conquered the grave and that is Jesus Christ. He did it by the power of the indwelling Spirit. That's what Paul is saying. This same power which demonstrated the power of God greater than the power of sin in Christ is now available to us. Romans 8:12:

Therefore [now is the application], brothers [you believers, you and me], we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.

We have an obligation, but the obligation is not to the flesh. Why not? Because a Christian is a person who has surrendered the flesh to the cross. That's where it belongs. It has no right to control us. Romans 8:13:

For if you live according to the sinful nature,

you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live....

In other words, let the new life that you received at your conversion now dominate you, direct you, control you. When the Holy Spirit lives in us, two things will happen:

1. We will put to death — that means we will put to an end — the sinful deeds of the body.
2. The righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in us.

But, please remember, all these wonderful privileges are the fruits of justification. Never look at sanctification for assurance of salvation. But we must be concerned about sanctification, we must be concerned about Christian living. I'll tell you why, because we are a spectacle to the world. The world is keeping their eyes on us. I have said before, and I will repeat many times, the words of the famous pagan philosopher Nietzsche, when he said to the Christian church, "If you Christians expect me to

believe in your Redeemer, you will have to look a lot more redeemed.”

No longer should we be concerned about ourselves; heaven is ours, guaranteed. “There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.” Then there must be only one concern, “Lord, please, let the world see what You are like in me.” When that happens, we will turn this town upside down, we will turn this state upside down, and we will turn the world upside down. God is not depending on numbers, He’s depending on men and women who, putting self aside, are willing to totally surrender themselves to the Spirit that dwells within them.

When that happens, we will no longer have to push people, “Do this and do that.” There are some who want me to push from the pulpit, “Tell our people what they should not do.”

Folks, I can tell you till I’m blue in the face, but if you’re not walking in the Spirit, I’ll lose more hair and you will lose your patience with me. My dear people, we have a Spirit Who is willing to

walk in you. We have a power that is available to us. And that power is to reproduce in us the character of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world desperately needs to see Him. Please, don't disappoint Him.

Chapter 23

The Blessed Hope

(Romans 8:14-30)

A few years ago, I had to fly to Boise, Idaho, to conduct a very sad funeral. A young boy, 16 years old, whom I had baptized three years before, had just dropped off his buddy at Gemstate Academy. He was returning home, and about a mile down the road, for some reason nobody knows, he veered off and ran into a stationary tractor at about 50 mph. The tractor broke in two and he, of course, died instantly.

It was quite a sad funeral. All his buddies were there; it was packed. As they said farewell to this young boy, one of the questions that we normally ask in these circumstances was, “Why, Lord? Why this young man? Why was his life snatched away at such a tender, early age, a very promising young boy?” Well, Paul tells us in Romans 8:28 that:

...In all things God works for the good of those who love him....

Sometimes that's hard to believe, isn't it? But now we're going to deal with one of God's wonderful ways of helping us during the time that we are here on this earth waiting for the glorious hope, the return of Christ.

We may not understand why things happen. But we do know one thing, that God has not left us without a Helper. I would like for you to consider the passage that we are going to cover today, which is really a continuation of what we covered last study.

In Romans 8, Paul turns, for the first time, to the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. In the last study, we saw that the Christian life is a life that is led by the Holy Spirit; it is a life that is controlled by the Holy Spirit; it is a life that is dominated by the Holy Spirit because it is a life of the Spirit.

When Jesus introduced the Holy Spirit to His disciples, He gave the Holy Spirit a very special name. I want to introduce you to that name. It is not in English, it is in Greek, but I want you to learn this word, because you will find that this word is very useful. So turn to John 14, and this is the promise that Jesus gave to His disciples, which promise is to us until the end of the world. John 14:16. Jesus says:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever....

The King James Version reads “Comforter.” But that word, “Counselor” or “Comforter,” comes from a very interesting Greek word called, “Paracleytos,” from the verb “paracaleo.” And that word — made up of two words, “para” and “caleo” — means, “One Who is by your side to help you.” So a better translation, and I’m glad to notice that my New King James has the correct translation of the Greek word:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you

another Helper to be with you forever....

You see, the word “Helper” is all-inclusive. When you need comfort, the Holy Spirit will give you comfort. When you need teaching, He will guide you into all truth. When you need an intercessor, He will be your Intercessor.

Jesus brought this out. He’s our Comforter in verse 16. He’s our Teacher in verse 26. Then, in John 16:13, He’s our Guide. I want to introduce you to the Paraclytos. I want you to learn this word. Don’t you ever forget that word, because it means Helper.

Christ came to help us in terms of salvation. The Holy Spirit is our Helper in terms of Christian living until the glorious and blessed hope. With this in mind, let us go back to Romans 8. For here, Paul presents the Holy Spirit as our Helper. We will discover that, in this passage, the Spirit helps us in three important areas:

1. In Romans 8:14-17, the Spirit helps us to

behave, to act, to live like children of God.

2. In verses 18-25, Paul tells us that the Spirit helps us to endure hardships and sufferings while we wait for the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is glorification.
3. In verses 26-30, Paul tells us the Spirit helps us and shows us how to pray, to make our prayers meaningful and in Christian growth.

So here Paul presents the Holy Spirit as Christ introduced Him to the Christian church. He is our Paraclytos. I would like you to go step-by-step with me and see how the Spirit helps us.

In verses 13 and 14, Paul reminds the Christian that we have an obligation. It is not an option; we have an obligation. And the obligation is both negative and positive. The negative is that we are no longer to walk in the flesh, which is our natural life. That is how the unbeliever walks. Now we still have the natural life, and it is possible for us to walk in the natural life. Paul will define such

Christians as carnal Christians, Christians whose behavior is unlike what it should be. Romans 8:12-13:

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live....

“We have an obligation,” says Paul, “and our obligation is to walk not in the flesh, but to walk in the Spirit. Let this new life, that has come into you through the Holy Spirit, control you, dominate you, guide you, that the world may see Christ in you through the Holy Spirit.”

Having said that, in verse 14, which is where our passage begins in this study:

...Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Now the actual text says it a little bit

differently. This is how the literal translation should be:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these behave like children of God.

You see, God wants us to behave like His children. Why? Because we are His children. We don't behave like His children in order to become His children, we are already His children and He says, "So please behave like who you are."

Because if you behave like what you are not, then the Bible calls such people hypocrites. A hypocrite is one who acts what he's not. God doesn't want us to act like Christians, in terms of acting. He want's us to behave as what we already are, children of God.

Now He realizes we cannot do it ourselves. So we need the Paraclaytos to fulfill that. So he says, "Those who are led by the Spirit, they will reveal this leading by their lifestyle, they will walk as children of God." What does that mean? What

does it mean to walk as children of God? Let me give you one clear example.

Turn to Matthew 5 where Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, is contrasting the walking in the flesh with walking in the Spirit. He doesn't say so, but it's obvious, it's implied. In verse 43, He's discussing or He's stating what the people of Judaism were taught by a people who had gone astray, and were trapped into legalism. Legalism is man trying to behave like God's children. And this is how it ends up in verse 43:

You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy."

Christ expounds on this and says, "You don't have to be a Christian to love your neighbor and hate your enemy; anybody can do that. But I say to you, this is how I want you to live" [Matthew 5:44]:

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...

“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” Boy, can you do that? Without the Paraclaytos, it is impossible. But why does Jesus say that you should do this thing? Look at verse 45:

...that you may be sons of your Father in heaven....

“Please behave like children of God. This is how God’s children behave: they love their enemies, they bless those who curse them, they do good to those who hate them, that they may be the children of their Father in heaven.” Then Christ goes on to explain in verse 45 His Father’s love towards the human race, both good and evil:

He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

As I read Romans 8, Paul tells us that if we are

led by the Spirit, the people around us will know it. They will say, “These people are behaving like God’s children.”

In the same Sermon on the Mount Jesus said in Matthew 5:14,16:

You are the light of the world.... Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

“You believers are the light of the world.” Then, in verse 16, He says, “Let your light shine that the world may see your good works, your love for your enemies, your blessing of those who curse you, praying for those who hate you. Let them see this, and glorify your Father that is in heaven.”

But, please remember, only those who are led by the Spirit can do this. You can’t do it by screwing up your willpower and making resolutions. The Jews tried that. “We will do everything the Lord has said” [Exodus 19:8]. Did they do it? No. But, as you are led of the Spirit, it

will be revealed because it is possible for the Holy Spirit Who raised Christ up from the dead to mortify your mortal bodies and produce righteousness. Then, in Romans 8:15, he goes on to say:

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again....

All through Paul's writings, slavery or bondage is linked with legalism. In Galatians 5:1 he says, "You have been set free, don't go back to the yoke of bondage."

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

There is no peace, there is no assurance, there is no hope in legalism. Outwardly it may appear wonderful, but you are constantly living in fear. And that, folks, is a tragedy, that Christians should live in fear.

I want to give you a text that is very important for us who are living in the hour of judgment. Turn to 1 John 4:16-18. I want you to notice what the Apostle John has to say to those who believe in God. Verse 16:

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

Two things. The question I am going to ask you is, “Do you know and do you believe?” What are we to know and what are we to believe as Christians? The love that God has for us. The unconditional, the self-giving love that God has for us; we saw that when we dealt with Romans 5:6-10. We know and we believe [or rely on] that love God has for us. And the reason that God loves us is not because we are good or because we deserve it, it is because God is love. The natural thing for God to do is to love us, because His love is unconditional.

What is the result of this? Verse 17:

In this way, love is made complete among us [i.e., our knowledge and our belief of love is perfected among us in this] so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

If you are still afraid of God's judgment while you are a Christian, you have not understood God's love, you have not been made perfect, you are still a victim of fear, and he will bring this out in verse 18. And the reason we have boldness in the day of judgment is not because we are satisfied with our performance, but because:

...in this world we are like him.

That's good news. Verse 18:

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

All works produced out of fear are

unacceptable to God. “Such religion,” says Ellen G. White, “is worth nothing.”

So let’s go back to Romans 8. What is Paul saying? Paul is saying that we who are led by the Spirit will give evidence by our behavior that we shall live like children of God. Romans 8:15:

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.”

That’s very interesting, two words, “Abba, Father.” Abba is an Aramaic word, the language of the Jews in Christ’s day, in Paul’s day. The word means, simply, “Father.” The second word that Paul used is “Pater” which is “Father” in Greek. So if you really translate those two words, it means, “Father, Father.”

Whether you are a Jew or whether you’re a Gentile, it doesn’t matter, if you’re a Christian, you can refer to God as “Father.” Paul is saying He is our Father, not our Judge, not our Executer, but our

Father, Who loves His children, and He wants to bestow all kinds of blessings. Then he goes into verse 16:

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

The human being is made up of three elements, and Paul points this out in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. We are made up of spirit, soul, and body. None of these elements are capable of independent existence. That is a Greek concept, not a Christian, Biblical concept. But each of these three elements has a function. Animals have body and soul, but human beings have body, soul, and spirit.

One of the aspects of the Spirit is our conscience. Our consciences belong to the realm of spirit. What Paul is saying here is that the Holy Spirit, Who is now dwelling in us, convinces us through our conscience that we are the children of God. You may not feel like a child of God, but, please remember, the Spirit convinces us in our conscience that we are the children of God because

we are in Christ. And because we are the children of God, verse 17 goes on to say:

Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ [we share with Christ what belongs to Him], if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

I want to emphasize what I've been trying to hammer away for the last few studies, and that is: in order for Christ to save us, He had to identify Himself with us. In order for that salvation to be made effective, we have to identify ourselves with with Him. When you do that, everything that is true of Christ you must accept as true of you, not only the good, but even the bad.

When Christ came to this world He came from heaven; His citizenship did not belong to this world. He is the Son of God, He came from heaven. But He came to a world that is under the evil one, under Satan. And Satan, using the world, made life hard for Jesus Christ. Jesus suffered

when He was here because He was not one of the world. He said clearly, “My kingdom is not of this world.” He suffered, but His suffering was only for a season. He suffered, and He was willing to suffer that we might be saved.

Now we must be willing to suffer, that His name might be glorified. But what Paul is saying here is that if you want to enjoy the glorification that Christ received when He went back to heaven, you must also identify yourself with the suffering He experienced in this world. Paul is saying in verse 17 that we are joint-heirs with Christ in all the blessings that we have. I want to pause here because we need to remind ourselves constantly who we are in Christ. We are joint-heirs with Him. What does that mean?

I hope you are familiar with Daniel 2. There we have the great image made of different metals and each metal represents a kingdom. There were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. These are all great nations. There were also the divided kingdoms, but the kingdom that I want you to

focus on is the kingdom that was represented not by the statue but by the stone.

If you read Daniel 2, you will discover that more time, more space, more words are being used to explain the stone than the others. But the difference between the stone kingdom and the rest is that all of them will be destroyed. But the stone kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom. And it will occupy all the territory of the other kingdoms.

In Daniel 7 we are told that the saints of the Most High will reign with Christ forever in that kingdom when it is established. I want to give you two more texts to help you, because we need to keep in mind that glorious hope. Revelation 20:6, where John tells us:

Blessed [the word means “happy”] and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

Who has part in the first resurrection? The believers. What about them? Number one, on them the second death has no power. Why? Because, in Christ, we have already died the second death. He took the pain, we enjoy the benefits. But you and I will never have to die the second death because we have already died the second death in Christ.

But John doesn't stop there. Not only does the second death have no power, but we will reign with Christ for a thousand years. Now that seems a long time, but please remember it is a long time because we human beings today are living in the context of time, we are time-bound people. But when we go to heaven we will be living in the context of eternity, and a thousand years in eternity is like the twinkle of an eye, it's like a moment, a split second moment. It's like a drop in the ocean.

If you take a cup of water from the Pacific Ocean, how much would the level of the water drop? Nothing. It's insignificant. So the thousand years will be like nothing.

Some will say, “What will we do after a thousand years? Will we have retirement?”

It is only those who work at things that they don't enjoy who want to retire. But there are some things from which we don't want retirement. For example, if we are kings of a country, we don't want to retire. You go to the countries where they have no laws like we have in this country, where a ruler, a president can rule as long as he wants. They don't want to give up.

You take Ethiopia. Do you know how old Haile Selassie was when he was taken captive by the Marxist government, the revolution? 83 years old! Long past the retirement period. But he did not want to give up that throne, even though he was senile. Do you know how old Jomo Kenyatta was when he died in Kenya? Close to 84 years of age. We don't want to give up.

Well, folks, I have good news: you don't have to give up your reigning. What will happen after

the thousand years is that God will remove His throne from heaven to this Earth. This Earth that rebelled against Him is going to be made the center of His kingdom. And I read in Revelation 22 that, when He moves His throne here, we will come with Him, and we will reign with Him. Revelation 22:5:

...And they will reign for ever and ever.

Because His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Why should we reign? Because we are joint-heirs with Christ. He is the King of Whom we are the kings. He is the King of kings, of whom we are the kings.

So Paul is saying here that this is going to be our privilege. But when will that take place? At glorification. What about the meantime? We will have to suffer, because we are living in enemy territory. I want to give you a text, it is out of context, but it is a text that my wife always uses in times of trouble, and it's very, very useful. The text is:

It came to pass....

So whenever you go through a hard time, remember “it came to pass.” Nothing that you are facing in this world is permanent. Nothing! It’s temporary. And I want to remind you that while we may have to suffer for a short time, it is only for a season. Our real hope, our blessed hope is the coming of Christ.

But, you know, we human beings can’t wait. We want everything now. It is worse in America for one reason: because this country has taught us that we can enjoy things now and pay for it later. But, folks, the Bible doesn’t say that about heaven. The Bible makes it clear that you have to suffer now and enjoy heaven later. Is it worth suffering? Well, listen to Paul. In Romans 8:18, listen to what Paul says about the suffering, and may God give us this attitude:

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be

revealed in us.

I don't care what you're going through, but it won't be as much as what Paul did. Paul went through a lot of problems. He was shipwrecked, he was flogged, he was mistreated, he was accused falsely by his own brethren. The suffering that you and I have to go through is like a drop in the ocean, because Paul is talking in the context of eternity. And we should live in the context of eternity because we have already received eternal life in Jesus Christ. But while we are waiting for that glorious hope we are going to groan, and so he says in verses 19-20:

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it....

In other words, when sin came into this world, God did not destroy the world. He said, "Yes, the world is cursed because of the fall, but I have given you a hope, and, until that hope becomes a reality

(which he will talk about in verses 24 and 25), we may have to suffer, we may have to groan, we may have to wait patiently.” Verses 21, 22:

...In hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

One day there in Kenya, an African teacher came up to me in desperation. It was 11 o'clock at night. He said, “My wife is having a baby. Could you please rush her to the hospital?” The hospital was more than five miles down the road.

So I rushed there, and we put her in the car, and she was having the baby in the car. I'm not a doctor; I was horrified. Here I was breaking the speed limit, and all I heard was screaming and shouting and I said, “Boy, it must be very painful.”

We men don't understand it, but I'll tell you, I

saw it. And I understand what this text is saying, therefore. But after the baby's born, it's wonderful. And the mother says, "It was worth it." But I'll tell you, folks, the suffering of this present time is worth it.

Let me make it clear. The whole world today is under the evil one. 1 John 5:19:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

And because it is under the evil one, Jesus made it clear in John 15:18,19:

If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

So we have to suffer, we have to groan. Look at Romans 8:23:

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

We have been saved but our bodies are still sinful. We are still plagued with the flesh, and we are struggling with the flesh. Paul says, “No, it won’t be forever.” And so he goes on in verses 24 and 25 and says:

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

In other words, our minds must be focused not in the present situation but in the future. We have a future, and that future is glorious. And if you look at that future and keep that in mind, your present suffering will seem as if it is nothing. But if you focus your minds on the present sufferings, you will feel like Jonah.

Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights, but when you read his account of it, he says, “I was there forever.” That’s how he felt. So keep your eyes on the future.

But now I want to say something about the word “hope.” Because in English, the word “hope” can have more than one meaning. Sometimes we use the word hope in a doubtful connotation:

“Have you passed your exams?” “I hope so.”

“Will you make it to heaven?” “I hope so.”

That is not the word that Paul uses. Paul is not doubting his salvation. He is sure. But he’s using the word “hope” in terms of something that he knows he will get but he doesn’t have at the moment. But he’s sure of it.

So he says, “Because I’m sure of what I’m going to get...” (that’s why he uses the word hope: “We were saved, but we were saved in hope...”),

“because I’m sure, I’m eagerly waiting with perseverance. And while I’m waiting, the Holy Spirit helps me. He helps me to endure the suffering, He helps me, guides me, comforts me, He intercedes for me.” And so Paul says in verse 26:

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

The Spirit, besides giving me strength to suffer, the same Spirit, the Paraclytos, also helps in our weaknesses. He understands when we groan, He understands when we complain, “Why, Lord, are you allowing this?” He understands. He understands our groaning and He makes our prayers meaningful.

We do not know what we ought to pray for...

Because we are plagued with this flesh. Often our prayers are egocentric.

...but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

God doesn't need words. He knows the groaning of your heart. Romans 8:27:

And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

You see, Jesus redeemed us. And that redemption is unconditional; I want to emphasize it. For 400 years now, the Christian church — and it doesn't matter to which camp you belong to, whether you're a Calvinist, or an Armenian, or even a Roman Catholic — the Christian church has presented the idea that all men are lost except those who the Bible says will be saved. And to the Calvinist, those are the elect, whom God predetermined He will save, which is only a few, or some.

The Armenian says, "Yes, Christ died for

everybody but it was only a provision, and you have to fulfill certain conditions before that provision is yours.”

So for 400 years, the Calvinist has been saying, “How can I be sure I am among the elect?” And for 400 years the Armenian, to which the Adventists belong, have been saying, “How can I be sure that I have fulfilled all the conditions, so that I can be sure of my salvation?”

The Bible teaches neither of these. The Bible teaches that God saved us unconditionally, that all men were redeemed in Christ. Only those will be lost who deliberately, willfully, persistently say, “God, we don’t want You!” Those who push Him away and say, “We don’t want You; we don’t want your gift!”

Then God will not force that upon you. But please remember that the Holy Spirit is there. You know why? Because when Jesus went up to heaven, He said, “Father, I have redeemed the world. But these people who have accepted Me,

who follow Me, need help. They cannot manage on their own. Can I send them the Holy Spirit?” Jesus said [John 14:16]:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever....

The Third Person of the Godhead, Who will be by your side not seven hours or ten hours a day. He doesn't have office hours. He has 24 hours a day, He's by your side until you die or until Christ comes. That is the kind of God that I worship, Who leaves me not helpless, but He has sent me a Paraclytos to be by my side.

The question is, “Do you know this?” For Paul says in verse 28:

And we know...

If you don't know this, then you have not understood the gospel. The unbeliever doesn't know this, even though what is true of the text may apply to Him, but he doesn't know this. The key

words here are, “and we know.” What do we know?

...that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to this purpose.

Now, some of the best manuscripts do not say it exactly like this. Some read, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.” So I’m going to read to you from the Revised Standard Version. Because the RSV and the New International Version are really the more accurate texts. This is what it says:

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love God.

In other words, not everything that happens to you is from God. But God will use anything that happens, the bad and the good, He will use it for your good. Because that’s all God has in mind.

Sometimes, when you are in the dumps, when

you have lost your job and everything goes wrong and the world is collapsing, please remember the Paraclytos is by your side. You can't see Him, you can't feel Him, but "do you know, do you believe" that He is by your side? He's there to help you, to guide you, to lead you. And then Paul says in verse 29:

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

This text has caused problems. There are two words, and they are not synonymous: "foreknowledge" and "foreordained." Foreknew and predestined are not the same words. Who is Paul referring to? He is not discussing here salvation; he is discussing whom God knew beforehand would accept the gift of salvation. The salvation is for all people. But he's not talking about the predestination of those whom he will save; he's talking about the predestination of those whom He foreknew would accept the gift of His Son: "Those whom God knew beforehand would

accept His Son He predestined (not in terms of salvation) but He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son that Christ might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”

So what is Paul doing here? He is not talking Calvinism here, he's not saying that God predestined some to be saved. What he is saying is that he knows beforehand those that will accept His gift. He's not responsible, but He knows because He's all knowing.

And those He knows, He has a special plan for them. He has predestined that He reproduce in you and in me the character of His Son. You see, He has predestined all people to be saved, but He will not force that salvation on all people. But He has predestined all that will accept that salvation,

...to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he [Christ] might be the firstborn among many brothers.

The word “firstborn” here means “prototype.”

Here Paul is using Christ not as a Savior. He is our Savior, He is our Redeemer, but here he is using Him as a prototype, which means that all that God accomplished in Christ's humanity is for our experience. He wants to reproduce in us what He has already accomplished in Jesus Christ. In other words, He wants us to reflect His Son, Jesus Christ. That is what He has predestined for every believer. For the world, He has predestined salvation; for the believer He has predestined, foreordained, a transformation of character until we reflect the image of His Son. And these are the steps, Romans 8:30:

And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

Remember, the "predestined" has to do with reproducing the character of Christ. God doesn't do a half and half work with us. I want to leave you with a promise. The promise is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:24. And verse 23 also but verse 24 is the one that I want you to keep in mind:

The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

He will do it! The work of justification, the work of sanctification, the work of glorification is not our job, it's the work of God. Through the Spirit, God is going to fulfill what He has already accomplished in Jesus Christ. Our job is faith. Our job is to walk in the Spirit. Our job is to say, "Not I, but Christ."

It is my prayer that we learn, daily, to walk in the Spirit, that we learn to say daily, "Not I, but Christ," that we will daily allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit, so that He may produce in us the character of His Son that we may behave and act like children of God.

While we may have to suffer in this world in many ways — physically, socially, mentally, economically — please remember, the suffering in this world, while we are waiting for the actual adoption to be a tangible reality, remember it is

only for a season. And remember that this suffering is not worth mentioning when you compare it to the eternal glory we will have in Christ.

So I leave with you God's Paraclaytos for us, our Helper. Don't depend on the church, don't depend on the pastor, don't depend on human beings, because when the time of trouble comes, the church will disintegrate. Your pastor will not be here. You will be out in the mountains. But please remember there is One by your side Who will never leave you, never forsake you. And He's there to help you, to guide you, to strengthen you, to comfort you.

Chapter 24

Agape Never Fails

(Romans 8:31-39)

How are we to prepare ourselves to face this time of trouble that is known in scripture and in Theology as the Great Tribulation? Many answers are given today by many people. There are some who say to the Christian church, “Don’t worry, there will be a secret rapture so that you will disappear from this earth before it happens.” Well the Bible doesn’t teach that. The Bible says that all Christians living in the last time will have to go through this but they will be delivered by God.

Then there is another group who say, “No, you need to store up food for two years.” Well, that sounds like a wonderful plan, except that, in the Time of Trouble there will still be thieves and robbers, and they will come and take your food before you know it, because they will not use pleading, they will use the point of a gun; so that

won't help.

There are others who say, "No, you must learn how to survive in the wilderness." They have this wilderness survival program. Well, that's fine, except the devil will simply move you from this mountain to somewhere else in the East, where you have not studied the vegetation there, and you will say, "Boy, I don't know which of this is edible and which is not." So you will be stuck.

And there are still others who say, "You need to overcome every inherited and cultivated tendency to sin because you will have to live without a Mediator." Now I have to say something about that. I believe that the gospel is powerful, that it is possible to overcome every inherited and cultivated tendency. But there are two things that we must see clearly:

1. We will not know it; our nature will remain sinful until the second coming of Christ. So we will always feel that we are sinners.

2. We may not have a Mediator, but we will not be living without a Savior. Impossible! We don't need a Mediator because the judgment is over, the verdict has been given in favor of the saints. But we will have to live by faith in a Savior, and the Holy Spirit will not be taken away from us (maybe from the world).

But the question is, how do we prepare for this crisis? Well, I believe that Paul the Apostle has the answer. For example, in Ephesians 3, talking to a church that was facing real concerns about a crisis that was coming, his prayerful answer is, "Only those whose faith is rooted and grounded in the love of God will be able to stand" [see Ephesians 3:16-19].

And the reason he gives you is this: that if you are rooted and grounded in the love of God, you have the fullness of God in you, you have a faith that is unshakeable no matter what happens. In other words, as the book of Revelation says, "You have the faith of Jesus Christ," a faith that endured

the cross even though He felt God-abandoned. It is this unshakeable faith, rooted and grounded in the love of God, that Paul is discussing in our passage in this study, in Romans 8:31-39.

This is the last section of Romans 8; our next study will be Romans 9, 10, and 11, which has to do with the question of the Jews and their problem. But I want to remind you that Romans 8 is the chapter on how Christians should live. And his answer is that Christians should walk in the Spirit because Christian living is a life by the Spirit.

In our last study I introduced to you the title that Jesus gave to the Holy Spirit in His work for the believer and the unbeliever in this world of ours. Do you remember that title? I gave you the Greek name, "Paraclytos." That is the word Jesus gave for the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean? It means somebody Who is by your side, your Companion, as a Helper. Jesus did not leave His disciples, His church, without a Helper. He sent the Holy Spirit to be our

Paraclytos, to be by our side to help us.

In our last study we saw that He comforts us, He teaches us, He guides us, and He intercedes for us. That is what Paul told us in the previous section. Now, in Romans 8:31, in view of what he has told us concerning the Spirit as our Paraclytos, he says:

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?

Paul is not saying there will be nobody against you. We know from Scripture that the Devil, for example, is against us. He is called in Revelation 12:10, “the accuser of our brothers.”

And the world, when it sees Christ in you, will turn against you, will persecute you. We know that the whole world, which has given itself to Satan, will be the means by which we will have to face the Great Tribulation. They will be the ones who will put us through the grill. We will be persecuted, we will have to face famine, we will be

hounded like dogs by the world.

So Paul is not saying that there is nobody against you. But what he's saying is this, "If God is on your side, does it matter if anybody is against you?"

I want you to look at the word, "God." Who is Paul referring to: the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit? And the answer is: all three. He has told us that the Holy Spirit is our Helper. And, as we go along in verses 33 and 34, he will tell us that the Father and the Son are on our side, too. And if the Godhead, the Lord of the universe is on our side, does it matter if anyone is against us?

Okay, having made the statement that God is on our side in verse 31, Paul gives the greatest evidence that can ever be given in Scripture, how God is on our side. What is the greatest evidence that God has given that He is on our side? Well, look at Romans 8:32:

He [i.e., the Father] who did not spare his own

Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him [i.e., with Christ], graciously give us all things?

Now I want to look at this verse very carefully. Turn to Genesis 22. I want you to turn to this passage because there we will find a word, the very same word that we find in Romans 8:32, the very same word at least in the Greek Old Testament known as the Septuagint, in Gen. 22:16. You remember, in chapter 22, God was testing Abraham's faith, and the test was very severe: "Take your son, your only begotten son in whom I have promised salvation, take him and offer him up as a sacrifice." That, I think you will all agree, was a very severe test. No greater sacrifice can be found in the Old Testament than the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. And in verse 16, after Abraham passed the test, this is what God said:

...I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son....

That word, “withheld” is the same word that you can find in Romans 8:32, “not spared”; it’s the same Greek word. What is Paul saying in Romans 8:32? God did not withhold from His Son the full wages of sin that belongs to you and me. “God spared not His own son but delivered Him up for us all.”

What did He not withhold from His Son? What is it that He refused to spare His Son from? Well, we need to turn to another passage and that is in Luke 22 in the New Testament. I want you to put yourselves in the shoes of those three disciples who witnessed this terrible incident recorded in Luke 22. We’ll begin with verse 42. This is Jesus in Gethsemane, a stone throw from the three disciples whom he had asked to watch and pray with Him. This is His prayer [Luke 22:42, 44]:

“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

The disciples had never seen Christ in such agony. The agony was so great that His capillaries burst and the blood oozed into His sweat glands and drops of sweat and blood came out of Him. What was the issue? He was facing the wages of sin for our sins, for the sins of the world. And three times He pleaded with the Father, “If it be possible, remove this cup, remove this cup.”

“No,” says God, “I will not remove that cup, I will not spare You. I will not withhold from you what you have to go through.”

Do you know why God did not spare His Son? It is not because there was enmity between Him and His Son. More than once the Father proclaimed to the world that [Matthew 3:17, Mark 1:11]:

This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.

Yet God refused to spare Him the cup for one reason: because He so loved the world. He so

much loved the world that had rebelled against Him that He would not spare His own Son, “but gave him up for us all,” says Paul.

Remember Romans 5:8?

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God demonstrated His love for us that while we were sinners, while we were enemies, while we were helpless, while we were ungodly, Jesus had to die on the cross. And Paul is saying that, if God did that while we were enemies to Him, if He did not spare His own Son [Romans 8:32]:

...how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Some translations read he will give us all things “freely,” which comes from the same root word as the word “grace,” which means, “How shall He not graciously give to us undeserving sinners everything in Christ?” Then he asks the question in

verse 33:

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

Some translations read, “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect,” but those “chosen” or the word “elect” do not mean those Whom He predetermined to be saved. He predetermined all people to be saved, but that salvation is a gift, a gift that you cannot enjoy if you deliberately refuse it. The elect are those who by a heart-appreciation have said, “Thank You God, for Your unspeakable Gift, Jesus Christ.”

“Who shall accuse the believers?” That’s the question in verse 33. We know Satan accuses us. Revelation 12:10 says so: he’s “the accuser of the brothers.” Sometimes it is your conscience that accuses you, then there are others who will accuse you. But there is one Person Who will not accuse you, and it is God.

Why does God not accuse you? Because He is

the One Who justifies you. And He justifies you not because we deserve it, but because He loves us, and He gave His Son to die for us. I want you to be clear on this, so I want to take you to a text that you have already seen and heard but need to be reminded of. Turn to Romans 4. So that you are clear about who does God justify. Romans 4:5:

However, to the man who does not work...

“To him who does not produce righteousness.”
That’s the context.

... but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Here is God, Who justifies us rebellious sinners because of His love and His gift in Jesus Christ, which we have accepted. How can this God, Who has justified you in Christ, turn around and accuse you? Impossible. Because God is not a hypocrite; He doesn’t do one thing one time and another thing another time. If He has justified you, He means it. He doesn’t change His views. So, number one,

God is on your side because He justifies you. Now go to verse 34:

Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that, who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

What is Paul saying? Christ died. Do you know why He died? That there might be no condemnation for you. I read in John 3:17:

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

And in chapter 8 of Romans, in this very same chapter, verse 1, we read:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....

How can Christ — Who, at infinite cost to Himself, liberated us from the condemnation —

how can He condemn us? Now there is the law that condemns you. I read in Galatians 3:10:

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

Condemned is the person who does not obey the law, to keep it in every detail. In this, all of us have failed. But the good news in verse 13 of Galatians 3 is:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”

And it is this that God made Him on the cross. It is this that God did not spare His Son from. How can Christ condemn you? But that is not all. Paul says that not only is there no condemnation from Christ, but this same Christ, Who has liberated us from condemnation by His death, Who is now risen from the dead, is sitting at the right hand of God,

making intercession for us.

Why is He making intercession for us if the Father and the Spirit are on our side? He's making intercession for us because you and I have an accuser. That accuser is Satan. You and I cannot defend ourselves against that accusation, because His accusations are correct. We are sinners. But we have One Who can rightly defend us, because He is our righteousness and He is our Intercessor. And I know what He will say. He will say what He said to Satan when Satan tried to rob Christ of the body of Moses in Jude 9:

...The Lord rebuke you.

And He will say the same thing that He says in Zechariah 3:2, which deals with the judgment, where the angel of the Lord has to stand before the Lord, and Joshua, which is the Hebrew word for Jesus, our High Priest is there to intercede for us. Do you know what He will say? He will say:

The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who

has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?

So, folks, God is on our side. The Father is on your side, the Son is on your side, and the Holy Spirit is on your side. Romans 8:31:

If God is for us, who can be against us?

They have no way to win, we are on the winning side. All this is because God is love, and so I go to verse 35:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Who will separate us from the love of Christ, the love that led Him to the cross? The love that said, while He was in agony [Luke 23:34]:

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

Who will separate from the love of Christ? And then he gives a whole host of things:

Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

Now some of us have gone through some of these things. But one thing you must be clear on: all of these things — tribulation, distress, famine, nakedness, peril — all of it will be heaped on us at one time in the Great Tribulation. David, who experienced some of this, makes this statement in Psalms 44:22 which Paul quotes in verse 36:

As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

That is how the world will treat the believers in the Great Tribulation. They will be treated like sheep that deserve to be slaughtered, because the whole world will wonder after the beast, who will receive his power from the dragon. The dragon is Satan, and Satan and Christ are at war. We belong to Christ and so we become enemies of Satan, enemies of the world. In other words, Christians

are citizens of heaven living in enemy territory and, in the Great Tribulation, those enemies will make their final effort to destroy God's people. But because God is on our side, we can read verse 37 with assurance:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

In ALL these things — not some of these things — in all these things which we will go through, “we are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us.” Not through your performance, not through your goodness, not through your might, not through your will power, but:

...through him who loved us.

In other words, if you and I are to be able to endure the Great Tribulation, if you and I are to be more than conquerors through Him, we need to be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. Turn to 1 John. Listen to that Apostle, the beloved Apostle

John. 1 John 4 and we'll begin with verse 16. And I hope by now this verse 16 is true of each one of you:

And so we know and rely on...

Two things: to know and to believe (or rely on). What do we know and what do we believe?

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

Now please remember our study on the love of God: it is unconditional and it is never failing. God loves us unconditionally. And His love for us never ceases; our love for Him might, but not His love for us.

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

First is the love that God has for us. God is love. And what John is saying is not that one of the characteristics of God is love, but "God is

love,” period. Everything about Him can be defined by that one word, “agape.” God is love.

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

In other words, our anchor is not us; our anchor is not even what God does in us. Our anchor is in Him Who is love. Having made that statement, John goes to verses 17 and 18 and applies this to those who know and believe. 1 John 4:17:

In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.

How do you know that God’s love has been made complete, been fully perfected in you? When you “have confidence on the day of judgment.” Why should you have confidence, boldness in the day of judgment? Because, out of love, God has made you to be righteous in His Christ, because “in this world we are like him.”

He is love, so we are love. We are filled with the fullness of God because we are filled with His love. We are abiding in His love and, therefore, 1 John 4:18 goes on to say:

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear....

Now let me be clear. From the human point of view, we will be afraid in the time of trouble. But deep down in the inner man, in our converted minds, we know in Whom we believe. And we know that the love of God is greater than the fear that is in the flesh because [continuing 1 John 4:18]:

...fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

Now please note the context. He is not saying, "He who fears persecution." We will be afraid of the persecution, but what we will not be afraid of is the judgment and the torment that comes from the

judgment. Why? Because the love of God has told us that we belong to God. He is on our side. He has justified us and He doesn't condemn us. And we have an advocate who will vindicate us and Who has vindicated us in the judgment.

So, going back to Romans 8, having made that wonderful statement in verse 37, which is my prayer for each one of you:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

I read those two beautiful statements which I hope you will memorize, not only in your minds but in your hearts. Romans 8:28-29:

For I am convinced that neither death or life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

“I am convinced without even the slightest shadow of a doubt, I am convinced completely and totally.”

Have you got it? Nothing above, below or horizontally, nothing in this world, in the universe, anywhere, can separate us from the love of God which, of course, was demonstrated in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Before I came to America, one of my jobs was chaplain of Nairobi University. We had 250 wonderful young people at that university.

In East Africa, we have the British system: not everybody can have the privilege of going to college like you have in this country. Only the cream of the crop go to university. The government, not the school, gives the 12th grade the state exam, and only those who have done extremely well, probably five to six percent of the whole student body, will have the privilege of going to the university.

We had 250 Adventist young people in the Nairobi University. I had three young kids there who were excellent men; of these, one was the president of the university group and one was the treasurer. These three were all studying medicine and they were inseparable. Not too long ago, I had a phone call from the treasurer, who had been given a scholarship from the World Bank to the University of California to take his Ph.D. He called me and gave me some sad news: the other student, who was the president, had left the church.

“Why?” I asked. He was such a godly young man. And he told me the sad story. The student president’s closest friend — the third of the three — had just finished his medicine degree after all those years. Just after graduation, he was riding in a taxi. The taxi was in an accident and he died.

This person who was the president of the group said, “Why did God allow that?” And he turned his back on God.

I had to write to him and said, “Please, God

never allows anything unless it is for the good.”

We need to remind ourselves of what we read last study in verse 28 of Romans 8:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him....

We may not understand it, but I know one thing: that young man who died in the crash, died in Christ; heaven is his. But the thing is this, it's a tragedy when people fail to understand that God is love.

Things are going to happen to you, folks, and the devil will come to you. I'm talking from experience. When you face persecution, when you face tribulation and distress and famine and nakedness and sword, all at one time, I know what the devil will do: he will come to you and you know what he will do? He will try and convince you that the reason why you are going through this terrible time is because God doesn't love you any more.

I can assure you, you will feel that. You will feel that God has forsaken you. You will feel that he doesn't care what you are going through. And, unless you are rooted and grounded in the love of God, you will not make it. We need to realize that God is love and His love is unconditional.

The same boy who died, this medical student, came to me one day while I was chaplain at Nairobi University and said, "Pastor, I have a real burden."

I said, "What's the burden?"

He said, "I have an uncle in the hospital who is dying of leukemia. The doctors have given him three months to live. Would you please go and pray for him? He is in agony."

So I said, "Sure." I discovered that the uncle was the head elder of his church 250 miles away.

As soon as I approached him, he pleaded with

me, “Please, ask God to forgive me.”

“What’s the big problem?” I said. “I mean, you are a Christian; you are the head elder of your church.”

“Yes,” he said, “but there is one sin I don’t think He can forgive me. Maybe if you pray, He’ll forgive me.”

“Boy,” I said, “you’ll make a good Catholic. What’s the problem?”

He began his confession. It was a terrible thing he did. His daughter, a teenager in high school, became pregnant. He was the head elder of the church; it meant disgrace to his family. So he took her to a witch doctor to have an abortion, to save his name. The witch doctor did something that killed her, and he felt now, two years later, that God was punishing him for that sin by giving him leukemia. What a false picture of God he had!

I read to him this text. “Look, Brother, God did

not spare His own Son! How can you accuse God of being such a person?” So I gave him a Bible study. I spent about two hours with him, showed him the love of God and the wonderful, unconditional good news of salvation, and his face began to smile and he said, “You mean to say there is hope for me?”

“Yes, Brother,” I said, “there is hope for you. GUARANTEED.” And I gave him a whole list of texts and said, “I want you to sit down and read these texts on your own, so that this truth comes to you from the word of God, not from me.”

So I left him. About two months later I said to myself, “Oh, I better go and visit him and say good-bye to him.” He had already been anointed by his church pastor, and the doctors had given him three months, and this was two months later. So I went to see him and, of course, they have big rooms there in the hospital, about 50 beds all squeezed together, and each bed has a number. So I went to his bed and it was empty. The first thought that came to my mind was, “He died. I

was too late.” But there was a nurse there and I said to her, “Where is Brother Okello?”

Before she could answer, at the end of the room, he said, “Pastor, I’m here.”

I said, “What are you doing there?”

Do you know what he was doing? He was sitting by the side of a Masai. This may not mean anything to you, but he was of a tribe that were bitter enemies of the Masai. You see, the Masai have a belief that all the cattle in the world, including America, belong to them. So they will go to a tribe and take the cows that belong to that tribe because it belongs to them. And, of course, it ends up in a feud. These two tribes were at loggerheads; they would kill each other every time they met. The government had to kind of keep them apart. And here is this man from the enemy tribe, giving the gospel to this Masai. I said to him, “What on earth are you telling him?”

“Pastor,” he said, “I am trying to get into this

dumb head of his that it is not the blood of cows, which he has been drinking all his life, that saves him, but the blood of Jesus Christ. But I can't make him understand the good news. Can you help me?"

"But," I said, "you should be in bed."

"What for?" he said, "I already have peace, thank you for that. I must give it to Him now." You see, he had now a hope, an anchor. No longer was he afraid to die. His one concern was to bring the gospel to this poor Masai who was also dying of a terminal disease.

My dear people, when you and I are rooted in the love of God, we will be able to say with Paul, "I am persuaded that nothing in heaven or earth, in this universe, can ever separate me from the love of God."

That is the kind of faith that you and I have to develop if we are going to go through the time of trouble. That's the kind of faith that Jesus had on

the cross. He felt forsaken of God, but He knew one thing: God's love never forsakes. That He knew, and that we must know.

“Agape never fails,” says Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:8. In John 13:1, I read:

Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of this love.

There will never come a time when God will stop loving you. Never. Even if you reject Him, He still loves you. And, please remember, that love is not simply words. John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Do you believe that the love of God which led Him to give His Son has given you eternal life? Do you believe that when you are facing tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, and peril that God has not forsaken

you? Do you believe that? That is the condition that you and I have to reach. And that is the great burden that Paul wants his readers of Romans 8 to understand.

Folks, you have the Paraclytos, the Holy Spirit by your side. He is there to help you, to intercede, and to convince you that you are a child of God, and that you are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that you will receive and develop such a faith, a faith that is unshakable because it is rooted and grounded in the love of God, the unconditional agape of God which was revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is my prayer for each of you. Amen.

Chapter 25

The True Israelite, Part 1

(Romans 9:6-13)

In chapters 9, 10, and 11 of Romans, the great Apostle Paul sidetracks. He doesn't sidetrack from his great theme of Romans, which is Righteousness by Faith, but he sidetracks from his concern for the Christian church at Rome, and he directs his concern now to his own people, the Jewish nation.

Even though Paul was called by God, set aside, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentile world, he had a tremendous burden for his own people, the Jews. This concern, this fact is all the more amazing when we realize that his own people, the Jews, hated him. They felt that he was a traitor, and yet Paul loved them, as we shall see in this study.

But the fact that we are dealing now with three chapters that have to do with the Jews does not

mean that we Gentile Christians should skim over these chapters, because the same Apostle tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:11 that the history of the Jews has been recorded in the Bible, for our benefit, upon whom the ends of the worlds have come.

The famous historian Santana made the statement once that if we forget history, we are doomed to repeat it. That's exactly why God has recorded the history of Israel, because he doesn't want us to repeat what they went through. He wants us to learn from their mistakes. The Jews were a very privileged people. In fact, if you look at Romans 9:4, listen to what Paul tells about his own people:

Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.

He says to these Jews God had given:

1. the adoption,
2. the glory,

3. the covenants,
4. the giving of the law,
5. the service of God, and
6. finally, to them God gave the promises. Or as Paul put it in Romans 3:2 which we've already covered:

...They have been entrusted with the very words of God.

They were a blessed people, but what did they do with this wonderful truth that God gave them? They perverted the oracles of God and they rejected the promise of God in Jesus Christ.

Likewise, I believe we, as Adventists, have been a very privileged people. I believe that God has given us some wonderful truths. Foremost, 100 years ago he gave us a clear understanding of God's unconditional good news of salvation. And

if we had not made the same mistake as the Jews, this earth would have already been lightened with the glory of Jesus Christ. But we are still groping in darkness.

Just recently a Calvinist, of all people, published a book. He's entitled it What's Good about the Good News? At the bottom of the book is this statement: "The plan of salvation in a new light." While I read this book with great delight, it was also with some sadness, because that new light God gave this church 100 years ago. So God has to bring it to the world through a Calvinist. But it's not too late, folks.

We are going to study three chapters. Yes, they are dealing with the Jews, but they have been recorded for our benefit. According to chapters 9, 10, and 11 of Romans, the Jews failed on two major counts, and their failure has very important significance to us. We dare not repeat their same mistake.

1. They failed to understand what God meant or

what constitutes true Israel. They thought that as long as they were the descendants, the physical descendants of Israel's three fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that they qualified to be God's elect, or God's covenant people.

And there are many Adventists who think that just because they have their name in the books, they qualify to be God's children. Well, I have bad news for you: that doesn't qualify you to be a child of God. There are some backsliders who have pleaded with us, "Please don't remove our names." Might as well, they don't come to church. But they think that their name in the books gives them some ticket to heaven. I have sad news for you; the fact that you belong to God's remnant church and your name is in the books does not qualify you for heaven.

The fact that the Jews had Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as their fathers did not qualify them for heaven. They made this mistake: they had not understood what God meant by Israel; they had failed to see why God gave them three fathers.

2. The second mistake, which was, of course, the result of the first mistake, is they failed to recognize God's way of saving sinful man. The promise that God made is that One of those seed of those three men would be sent by God to be the Redeemer of the world and that salvation is by faith alone in His righteousness, and not by your own lawkeeping. But they failed there. The result is that God had to take the keys of the kingdom and give it to the Christian church.

Now the key statement in Romans 9 is in verse 6, and I want you to look at it. Paul makes a statement there after expressing His concern for the Jews, who were blessed, in verse 6 of chapter 9, he says:

It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.

Now what does he mean by that statement? God gave Israel many things: He gave them covenants, He gave them the Sanctuary service,

and He gave them promises. Now all those things were summed up in one promise which He gave not once or twice or three times but many times repeated after that. He gave this promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That promise was that their children, their seed, would be the inheritance of the New Canaan, the promised salvation.

Then Jesus, at the end of His ministry, turns around to this very same people — you'll find this statement in Matthew 23:37-38 — He turns around to the Jews at the end of His ministry and He says to them:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate.

In other words, there's no hope for you. This has created a problem, because I believe that when he made that statement in Romans 9:6, Paul had in

mind a statement that God made in Numbers 23 and especially verse 19, and that was:

God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

God is not like man, who breaks promises. Whatever God promises He will keep. He had promised that all of the three fathers — Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — that their children would belong to Israel, would be the elect, they would be God's covenant chosen people. And now Christ says, "I leave your house desolate."

And Paul says, "Does that mean that God has failed to keep His promise?" That is the issue he discusses in chapters 9, 10, and 11 of Romans. After the discussion, he comes to this conclusion (Romans 11:26):

And so all Israel will be saved....

God will keep His promise. That answer to the question in Romans 9:6 has caused a lot of confusion in the Christian church. There are some who believe that after God has dealt with the Gentiles, He will give the Jews a second chance, and then the Jews as a nation will no longer reject the Messiah, they will accept and ALL Jews will be saved.

But to understand Romans 11:26, we need to understand the logic of Paul's argument beginning with chapter 9. We need to ask the question, "What did Paul mean by the term 'Israel'?" What did He mean by that term? And how is Israel going to be saved? Because these are the two areas where the Jews failed. These are the two areas that Paul corrects, and points out the problem.

With this background, let's go through chapter 9 now. What I'm going to do is give a general study, an exposition of chapter 9. Then, the next three studies will be on this one topic: what constitutes true Israel. Because we as Christian-Gentiles need to know the answer to that question.

I'll tell you why, because God doesn't have two people, Jews and Gentiles, God has only one people, Israel. Either you belong to Israel or you don't. But the question is, "What constitutes Israel?"

In the first five verses of chapter 9, Paul expresses His concern for His fellow Jews. And I want to repeat, it is amazing that Paul had a concern for the Jews when you realize how they treated Him. Turn to Acts 21; we have here a historical incident that will show how the Jews felt about Paul.

In Acts 21, Paul had returned from his last missionary journey. He had come to Jerusalem to give a report to the Brethren on what God had done through his ministry, and James called him aside and said, "Praise the Lord for what God has done to the Gentiles through your ministry, but I want you to know, Paul, that a lot of Jews in Israel have accepted the Messiah."

And Paul said, “Praise the Lord!”

“But there’s one problem, Paul,” says James. “These Jews feel that you are a traitor to Israel. They feel that you are against them, against their law, against their system, against their temple. We know that this is not true. So why don’t you give them some evidence?”

James gave him some “good advice.” “Go through the cleansing ceremony, shave your head, etc.” Well, I would have no problem to do that, some of you would. But Paul was a good obedient fellow. I don’t know if He accepted that advice as good or bad. But since James was a pillar of the church, he said, “James, I will do what you say, because I don’t hate these people. I don’t hate my own people.”

So he did follow the advice, but it backfired. After he had gone through the cleansing ceremony, he entered the temple, and listen to what the Jews did. They grabbed him, first of all. Then, in Acts 21:28, they cried out:

Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place [i.e., the temple]. And besides, he has brought Greeks [Gentiles] into the temple area and defiled this holy place.

Can you imagine, it is to such people that Paul is talking about in Romans 9:1-2:

I speak the truth in Christ — I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit — I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.

“You may think that I’m against you, you may think that I’m a traitor, but God can read my heart that I have great sorrow, and continual grief in my heart for my own fellow Jews.”

Then he makes a statement, a statement that has caused me to really ponder. Have you ever wrestled with verse 3? Do you know what Paul is saying in verse 3? Here is evidence that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. For here we

have evidence that Paul is not lying, he's telling the truth, his conscience also bearing witness in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit would not have allowed him to record this if he was lying. What is he saying? He is saying that "I am willing to be lost forever if this would save my fellow Jews who hate me." That is the power of the gospel. Romans 9:3-4a:

For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel.

Do you know what that phrase means, "accursed from Christ"? It means to be lost eternally, no more heaven. It means to be burnt up in that lake of fire. Paul is saying, "I am willing to do that, that's how much I love my fellow Jews, if that would save them." But he knows it doesn't, but that is what he's willing.

There is only one other man that expressed the same ideas for the Jews, and that was Moses in Exodus 32:32, where he said, "Lord, please don't

destroy these rebellious people.”

Because God had told him, “I will destroy them and make out of you, Moses, the father of a new nation.”

And Moses said, “Please don’t do that. If you can’t forgive them, blot me from the book of life. Wipe me out from salvation that they may live.”

That is the revelation of agape manifested in the flesh. That is the kind of people God is going to produce in these last days. Not one or two, but a whole church of people.

You cannot do it by works. It is by faith alone that you can experience this power, because you and I cannot generate this kind of love. The only love you and I can generate is egocentric love, love that seeks its own, the love that the disciples revealed before the cross. They did not accept Christ because they loved Him; they accepted Christ because they believed He was the Messiah and they wanted to be number one in the kingdom.

It was only after the cross that they were willing to die for Christ. But here is Paul, a transformed man, revealing in His life the power of the gospel. He says [Romans 9:3-5]:

For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

That's his introduction for His concern for the Jews. Then, the first thing he tells his Jewish brethren, "Jews, I want you to know that God has not failed to keep His promise. The problem is not God, the problem is you. You have failed to understand what God means by Israel." And so the second half of verse 6 says:

For not all who are descended from Israel are

Israel.

In other words, the fact that you have the blood of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, doesn't qualify you to be an Israelite in my eyes, says God. Look at verse 7:

Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

Do you realize what Paul is doing here? He's playing with words, with concepts. You see, Abraham did not have only one son. He had two sons, at least two initial sons. He had Ishmael, and he had Isaac. And Ishmael had a legal right to call Abraham Father.

But Ishmael doesn't belong to Israel. So Paul is saying, "The fact that you are a descendant of Abraham doesn't qualify you to be Israel because Abraham also had Ishmael and he could call Abraham Father but not call himself Israel. You

have to have even Isaac as your father.” Now Ishmael did not have Isaac as his father. Look at verse 8:

In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.

Esau could claim both Abraham and Isaac as his father, but Esau doesn’t belong to Israel. By the way, when you read verse 13:

Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

Please don’t take the English meaning of the word “hated.” God did not hate Esau; God rejected Esau and the reason why God rejected Esau is because Esau rejected God. If you read the whole history of Esau, you will notice that he sold his birthright — which means he sold what God had promised him — for a bowl of lentil soup. But the word “hated” is the wrong word in English; it should not have been used. But, anyway, that’s

what it says here in your Bibles. But please remember, what is Paul saying here when he says:

In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.

As I read the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, I come across a phrase that is repeated time and time again. For example, one day the Jews came to Jesus, and they asked him a question. It had to do with salvation, and going to heaven. Jesus made a very strange reply; I wrestled with it for a long time. He said [Matthew 22:31-32]:

But about the resurrection of the dead — have you not read what God said to you, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.

And I said, “What do Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have to do with the living? As I began to wrestle with this, I made a wonderful discovery,

and that's what I want to share with you in my next three studies. I'll tell you what the discovery is: that God gave Israel three fathers, for a very specific purpose. That these three men are to be the prototype, the pattern, the example of what all the children of God should be like. In other words, in order for you to be an Israelite, you have to have the qualities of these three men.

Abraham stands for faith. He is the father of all who believe. And we will come to that, we will go one by one. Isaac, what's special about Isaac? You look at the Bible, he did nothing special. So what does he represent? Very simple, not what he did, but how he came into this world. He was born from above. And Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Unless you are born from above, unless you are born again, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.

Let me give you a text, we'll come to it in more detail. Galatians 6:16. You see, both Romans and Galatians are dealing with the same topic, just from different angles. Galatians 6:16:

Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.

What rule? Verse 15:

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.

That is what Isaac stands for. And, as we will see in Galatians 4, Paul will say about Christians, Gentiles and Jews, believers, “We, like Isaac, are the children of promise.”

So Isaac stands for the New Birth. Now what about Jacob? Do you know why God changed the name of Jacob to Israel? Because what did he do? By the way, do you know what the name “Jacob” means? It means “schemer.” And human beings are always trying to scheme one way or the other to go to heaven. God gave a promise to Rebecca before Jacob was even born, that Jacob would have the birthright. But Jacob said, “Boy, my problem is that my brother was born first. I tried to pull him

back by the heel but he would not come back. And so, legally, he has the birthright.”

So he tried to scheme to get that birthright. He didn't have to. He had to learn the hard way that when God promises something, he gives it to you. All you have to do is believe. Finally, he learned the hard way that there's only one way to get the promise and that is to cling to God. Then God said, “Because you have prevailed, I will change your name to Israel.” So Jacob stands for those whose faith endures unto the end. As Jesus said in Matthew 10:22:

All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

So these men represent three qualities. It is not being their literal descendants that saves us. This is the argument of Paul, verses 6-13, in our study. It is not those who strive, those who run, who are God's chosen people, but those who believe, those who are born again, and those who through faith don't give up but they endure to the end.

Then, in verses 14-29, a big section, Paul explains that God's salvation and God's mercy is based in His sovereignty and not on human rights. Not one of us can claim salvation, whether you're a Jew or whether you're a Gentile, as Paul has already proven in Romans 3:9,

...We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.

“There is no difference between Jew and Gentile because all are under sin.” “There is none righteous,” there is no one who qualifies to be saved by native right.

“Whether you are a descendant of these three men or whether you are not, it doesn't matter,” says Paul. “Salvation is based on God's sovereignty, which means that He and He alone has the right to say who is saved and who is not. You and I have no right to question Him.” He gives two examples. One example is in Romans 9:17:

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: “I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.”

What is Paul saying here? Because God is sovereign, everything that happens, happens because He allows it. He allowed Pharaoh to become the most powerful person, the head of the most powerful nation in the world that was known in those days. Egypt was the most powerful nation in the world in the Exodus time. God allowed that, for Pharaoh to become the most powerful.

Then he took a small, insignificant people who were serving as slaves to this great, powerful nation and he says, “I am going to deliver these people with a mighty hand so that I can prove that even Pharaoh is no match with me.”

Have you battled with sin, and it has knocked you down? I want you to know, folks, there is a power, there is One Who is greater than the power of sin, Jesus Christ. As we saw in Romans 8:3,

“He condemned sin in sinful man.”

But how do we experience that power, by trying? No. By paying money? By going on a pilgrimage to Israel? No, by faith alone. There is much battle these days over sanctification. I want to make it clear: justification, sanctification, glorification — all those three come from God. Why are we worried about God’s part, as if He needs help?

But how are these three things experienced? By faith, folks. Our part is faith. God’s part is justification; God’s part is sanctification; God’s part is glorification. You cannot produce any of those three; it is God Who will do it. Our part from beginning to end is faith. “The just shall live by faith.” As Paul says in Romans 3, from beginning to end it is nothing but faith. I am justified by faith, I am sanctified by faith, and I am glorified by faith. My part is to believe and to surrender to the truth that God has given to us in Christ. The second example is found in verse 21 of Romans 9:

Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?

In other words, when a potter makes a pot, he may make it for the use of the king, or he may make it for the use of the menial person down there. Who decides what kind of pot that clay is going to be made into? The Potter, folks, and the clay has no say in the matter. The clay doesn't say, "Why did you make me menial?" You and I have no right to question God. But here is the truth, folks. Look at verse 22:

What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath — prepared for destruction?

Who are the objects of wrath? Ephesians 2:3b:

Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

All of us, Jews and Gentiles, are by nature the children of wrath. That's what we deserve, if you want to talk about what we deserve. But God will show mercy on whom he will show mercy. As I read scripture, He has shown mercy not only to the Jews but also to Gentiles. Look at verses 23 and 24 of Romans 9:

What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory — even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?

Out of His sovereignty, God chose to save all men in Christ. The Calvinists say, “No, only the elect, whom He predetermined to be saved.” The Bible doesn't teach that. And the Armenians, to which we belong, say, “No, what God did was only a provision, but we have to do something before He will save us.” The Bible teaches neither. That's the new light.

But God gave it to this church 100 years ago

that, in Christ, God legally justified all people. And if anyone is lost, it is not because of Adam's sin, not because of your sins, but because you deliberately, wilfully, persistently, and ultimately said to God, "I don't want your gift. And I don't want You."

Then God will not force Himself, because there is a choice that God has given. In other words, in His sovereignty, God saved all mankind, but in His sovereignty He also created all people with the freedom of choice. He will take nobody to heaven who doesn't want to go to heaven. But anyone who rejects heaven needs to have his or her head examined. That's all I can say.

Then he gives evidence to the Jews, in verses 25-29. He gives evidence, number one, in Hosea to show that God planned the salvation of the Gentiles right from the beginning:

I will call them "my people" who are not my people....

Then, in verse 27, Paul tells them the sad fact is that even though He has saved all Israel, only a Remnant (i.e., the faithful) will be saved. Why? Is God breaking His promise? No, because of He says in verses 30-33. I want you to notice why because now we are dealing with the second problem, the second failure of the Jews. The first one was they failed to understand the significance of the three Fathers. In this they had failed, and this failure led them to the second major failure: they had failed to see how God will keep His promise, how God will save all mankind, how God will save Israel. Here it is, verses 30 and 31:

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness [who did not try to save themselves by their own good works], have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith [because that's God's way of saving all men]; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it.

There are two ways that you can try to be saved: one is God's way, one is man's way. God's

way is in Jesus Christ that becomes yours only by faith. That's God's way. Man's way is how? What the Jews tried. Why did the Jews fail? Romans 9:32a:

Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works.

There are, sad to say, people in my church who are trying the same method. Why can't we learn from the mistakes of the Jews? They are trying by the works of the law.

By the way, the phrase "works of the law" is the New Testament definition of the English word, "legalism." Is Paul against the law? No! He's against works of the law. He's against legalism; he's not against the law as a standard of Christian living. He's not against the law as the fruits of salvation. He will touch on that when we come to chapter 13 when he will say, "Love is the fulfillment of the law." He's against anyone trying to go to heaven outside of Christ. And, by the way, you cannot have any mixture. You can't say,

“Christ plus me,” or “Christ plus works of the law.” It is Christ and nobody else. Then he goes on to say [Romans 9:32b]:

They stumbled over the “stumbling stone.”

Do you know who Paul called a stumbling stone? Jesus Christ. He is a stumbling stone for those who want to try to go to heaven by their own righteousness. Why? Because when you try to go to heaven by your own righteousness, you are saying that, “I’m good enough to be saved.” You are denying what God says, that “You are 100% sinner. You need a Savior.”

One day, Ellen G. White asked her angel, “What will be the shaking? What will bring about the shaking in this church?”

The angel said to Ellen G. White, “It will be the straight testimony of the Laodicean Message.”

Do you know what the Laodicean message is? Revelation 3:17-18:

You say, “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.” But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

“Buy from Me white raiment.” The word “buy” means “exchange”; it means giving up your self-righteousness in exchange for Christ’s righteousness. If you don’t believe me, please look at Philippians 3:9, where Paul gave up his righteousness in exchange for the righteousness of Christ which comes by faith. Philippians 3:8-9:

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the

righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

After Ellen G. White makes that statement, she made a statement to the ministers. I have taken that statement and put in my Bible. I want to read it to you. I put it there not for you but for me because it's for ministers. It's found in Testimonies to Ministers, pages 64-65. But this truth applies to you, also. Regarding the shaking, she says this is what will cause the shaking, the presentation of Christ our Righteousness, and I believe it's already begun:

“They [i.e., these ministers, who are self-righteous, who are depending on their righteousness, or even on what God does in them] are not willing to be deprived of the garments of their own self-righteousness, they are not willing to exchange [that's what the word “buy” means] their own righteousness, which is unrighteousness, for the righteousness of Christ, which is pure, unadulterated [no mixture] truth.”

The Jews made two mistakes. Must we repeat

those mistakes? Why can't we look at the history of Israel and say, "Lord, please deliver us from the same mistakes."

Let us never get the idea that because God has given this church wonderful truths that we are better than the other Christians. We don't have that monopoly. Why did God give it to us? I can't answer, except that he's sovereign. Not because we deserve it.

And please remember, there's only one way God has promised to save all mankind, and that is in His Son Jesus Christ. You can't buy Him, you can't earn Him. The only way that righteousness can be yours is by faith, by saying like the Publican said when he prayed, "God forgive me, a sinner. I am depending entirely on your mercy, on your righteousness, on your gift, Jesus Christ."

May God help us that we learn from the mistake of the Jews, and not repeat it, is my prayer in Jesus' name.

Chapter 26

The True Israelite, Part 2

(Romans 9:6-13)

You will remember that I pointed out to you that chapter 9, chapter 10, and chapter 11 of Romans is a unit. In these three chapters, Paul shares his great burden for his own nation, which is the Jews. I hope that we can share the same burden for our own nation, the United States. But in these three chapters he points out the tragic situation of His own people in the context of the great theme of Romans, which is righteousness by faith.

According to the arguments of these three chapters, the Jews had failed on two major counts. Number one, they failed miserably to understand the significance of what it means to be a true Israelite. And number two, they failed to accept God's promised way of salvation, which is by faith in His Son Jesus Christ, and not by their own performance or anything else.

In chapter 9, Paul will deal with the first problem, what really constitutes true Israel. But both the problems are very important to us today. In fact, if you read 1 Corinthians 10:11, there Paul tells us that what took place in the history of the Jewish nation, has been recorded for our benefit, especially for those who are living at the end of time, “upon whom the ends of the world have come.” 1 Corinthians 10:11:

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

What we’re going to do in this and in the next two studies is to answer that one question that Paul raises and answers himself in Romans 9, and that is; What constitutes true Israel? Let me quickly review what we already covered in the previous study.

Number one, we discovered that God gave Israel three fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Number two, we discovered that to each of these three fathers God gave, or made a solemn promise, and the promise is that their children, their seed, would inherit the kingdom of God. That was the promise.

But, when Christ was on this earth, at the end of his earthly mission, He stood up and, addressing the Jewish nation, He declares in Matthew 23:38:

Look, your house [that means your nation] is left to you desolate.

If this is true, it raises up a question, it raises up a problem, and the problem has to do with the fairness of God. Does this statement that Jesus made mean that God has failed to keep His promise that He made to these three fathers? In chapters 9 to 11, Paul answers this primary issue. In chapter 9:6, which we saw last time, Paul says, “No, God has not failed to keep His promise.” The way that he puts it is this way [Romans 9:6]:

It is not as though God’s word had failed.

Then after arguing the whole situation, in Romans 11:26, he'll conclude:

And so all Israel will be saved....

In other words, God WILL keep His promise. The question that we need to understand is, "What did Paul mean by 'all Israel'? Did he mean all Jews? Or did he have somebody else in mind?" I want to start by turning to Romans 2, something we have already covered. There Paul has already pointed out in the last two verses of chapter 2 that there are two kinds of Jews. Look at verses 28,29:

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

In other words, Paul says the person who is a natural descendent of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is

not, in God's eyes, a true Jew. That doesn't qualify you to belong to Israel. These three fathers were given to Israel by God for a very specific purpose; they were to be the prototypes of what God's children should be like. In other words, it is the qualities of these three men that qualify a person to be true Israel.

I would like today to concentrate on the first one, Abraham. Before we turn to Abraham, I would like to show you, from the words of Jesus Himself, that Jesus also, like Paul (and they were, of course, united: Jesus was the Son of God, Paul was His messenger), they both teach that these three men do not represent a literal nation, a physical nation. In other words, it is not Israel according to the flesh which is God's chosen people, it is Israel according to the Spirit. Not one who is one outwardly, but inwardly, not in the letter, but in the Spirit.

So I want to turn to a couple of statements made by Christ. I can give you others, but two are enough. Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 8. As

you turn to this passage, I want to give you the context, the background; you must always read texts in their context. The context is a centurion. He was a Roman centurion, a Gentile, not a Jew, a Gentile. He comes to Jesus with a request. The request is that Jesus heal his servant. Now, the argument of the centurion is this [Matthew 8:8-9]:

“Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

“I am a Centurion; I have soldiers under me. When I speak to them, they obey. But my authority is only over my soldiers. You, Jesus Christ, your authority is over everything. You have authority over sickness, you have authority over the elements. In fact, you don’t even have to come to my house to heal my servant. You have such great authority that you can only speak the

word and my servant will be healed.” And when Jesus heard those words from a Gentile, listen to His response in verse 10:

When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.”

I wonder if Christ would have said the same thing if He were standing up and addressing us? “I have not found such great faith as I have found in this man, a Gentile.” Matthew 8:11:

I say to you that many will come from the east and the west [in other words, who are not literal Jews, from every corner of the world], and will take their places at the feast with [not Me, but] Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Because these three men represent the prototype of God’s nation. Matthew 8:12:

But the subjects of the kingdom [the Jews who were boasting that they were God's children] will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

They were literal descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but they did not have the three qualities that these three men represented. Turn a few pages to chapter 22 of Matthew; let me give you another example. These three fathers appear all through the Bible. We tend to ignore it, but they have a lesson for us; we just cannot remain ignorant of it. In Matthew 22, the context is the Sadducees. The Sadducees were a group within the Jewish nation who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. We would call them the liberal theologians of Christ's day. In verse 23 we get the background:

That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question.

Then they gave a crazy illustration about seven men marrying the same woman, not at one time but

consecutively. And the question is, “Whose wife will that woman be in heaven, if there is a resurrection?” In other words, they were trying to refute the resurrection by this philosophical argument. But I want you to notice how Jesus responded, in verses 31 and 32 especially:

But about the resurrection of the dead — have you not read what God said to you...

Then he quotes Exodus 3:6:

...“I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”?

That’s the quotation. But I want you to notice the interpretation that Jesus gives to that quotation:

He is not the God of the dead but of the living.

These three represent the living!

Let us go now to Abraham. The starting point is Galatians 3:26-29. Remember, the context of

our study is Romans 9, where Paul said in Romans 9:6, “Not everyone who belongs to literal Israel belongs to God’s Israel.” We are expanding on this one statement on this study on Romans 9, and I would like to start with Galatians 3:26-29. Look at two of the verses of this passage. Galatians 3:26:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus....

Remember, the Galatian church was a mixture of Gentiles and Jews, mainly Gentiles. But He says, “you are all the sons of God,” not because you have the blood of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but because you have faith in Christ Jesus. Then he explains how this is true, because he says [Galatians 3:27]:

...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with [have become one with] Christ.

When you put on your clothes, those clothes become part of you. If you travel from where you

are to somewhere else with those clothes, those clothes go with you, because you put them on. That's the illustration that Paul is using here. "Baptized into Christ" is putting on our Lord Jesus Christ. And when you put on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are no longer an American, or an Indian, or an African, or a Chinese. There is no Jew, there is no Gentile, there is no male, and there is no female. Galatians 3:28:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

But now look at verse 29, it's Galatians 3:29 I want you to look at:

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed [child], and heirs according to the promise.

How did you become a child of Abraham? Because you belong to Christ. How did you belong to Christ? By faith and baptism. I would like to give you a couple of more statements from

the book of Romans, which we covered already. So this is a reminder. Romans 4. I want to read 4 verses in this chapter: Romans 4:13,16,17,18. Look at Romans 4:13:

It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

The New Testament writers did not have an equivalent Greek word to our English word “legalism.” So very often Paul will use the word “law” or the phrase “works of the law” for our English word “legalism.” That’s how he uses it here. He’s not against the law as a standard of Christian living. In fact, he’s for it; when we come to Romans 13, we’ll see that. But he’s against the law as a means of becoming a child of God. He’s against legalism as a means of salvation. And he’s saying that the promise that was given to Abraham and to his children was not through the law but through the righteousness of faith. And then in verse 16 he goes on to say:

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring — not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

Why are our people still doubting when God says, “It is sure!” It is sure, or guaranteed, to whom? It is sure only to the Pastors and those who are being very good? It is sure to whom? To all the seed, to all who believe, not only those who are of the law (i.e., the Jews), but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. Who is the “us all”? All who, like Abraham, believe in God's promise. That's the statement.

How did Abraham become God's prototype for all believers? We need to understand the details. We need to understand Abraham because he's our father. To the Jews, “father” did not mean somebody who produced me. In this context, the word “father” means, “He who is my example, my prototype.”

Let's start with Genesis 12:1-4. That is the call of Abraham. God comes to Abraham and gives him a call. It's important that we understand the call of Abraham. God speaks to Abraham in verse 1, and He says:

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people, and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."

Why? Does God like to break up homes? There is a text that says that Abraham and his family, his parents, and his neighbors worshiped other Gods. Joshua 24:2:

Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods.'"

That's the phrase, "they worshiped other gods."

Abraham was not raised up a believer; he was raised up in idolatry. And God said, “Come out of that environment.” Just like today, God says, “Come out of the world, come out of your culture, and enter into my culture, which is in complete contradiction to human ways of life.” So it’s the same call; we call it, “The call out of Babylon.” Jesus said in Matthew 28:19:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit....

He meant, “Call them out of the world and into my camp.” In fact, Jesus said to the disciples in John 15:19:

...As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world....

The same thing as with Abraham. Then, in Genesis 12:2-3, God says:

I will make you into a great nation and I will

bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and ALL peoples on earth will be blessed through you [emphasis supplied].

Why did the Jews not see that God had given Abraham to be the father of the blessing to all the world, and not just them? But they failed to see this call right from the very beginning.

Verse 4 tells us that Abraham obeyed the call. He was 75 years old when he left his country, Haran. In those days, Abraham at 75 was in the prime of his life. They lived a little bit longer in those days than they do now. He was middle-aged, and I like that. Some of you kids will like it in the future. Because I sure liked being your age, too. That's when you're young and strong. In 1968, I climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro at 19,000 feet and had no problem. Today, I'm like Abraham: I need a stick to climb to 7,000 ft.

Here was the call of Abraham. Hebrews 11:8-

10 says that Abraham obeyed by faith. He did not obey God because he wanted to be saved, but because he believed God's promise. He obeyed. Hebrews 11:8-10:

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Abraham responded by faith and his obedience was the obedience of faith.

Now, Abraham had no children when the promise and the call were made. He was 75 years old, he was already married, but no kids. But God promised him that he would be the father of a great nation; that meant God had to give him a son. I can imagine Abraham telling his neighbors and

friends, “Do you know something? God is going to give me a son!”

God promised him a son. One year went by, two years went by, three years went by, and people began to ask him, “By the way, where is that son God promised you? You know we take nine months to produce a son; surely God should take less than that.”

Four years went by; it was getting more embarrassing. Eight years went by, approximately, and no children. Now Abraham was getting old. So I come to chapter 15 of Genesis [Gen. 15:1]:

After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.”

“Abram” was the name given to him by his parents. “Abraham” was the name God gave him. The name “Abram” means “exalted father.” Hebrew names had meanings that were important. So he was the “exalted father.” Many fathers, but

you are the one that I have exalted. So God said, “Why are you afraid, why are you doubting? I am your shield, your exceeding great reward. Depend on me.”

Abraham said, “Yes, but here’s the problem, Lord. You have not given me a son. I am childless. What happened to your promise? The only son in my household (which is the extended family in the Jewish system) is Eliezer of Damascus. Is he the promised son?”

God said, “No way. He is not the promised son. The son that I have promised will come out of your loins. He will be your very own child.”

Read Genesis 15:5-6. When God told him that, He took Abram for a walk. He said, “Look, do you see how many stars there are in the sky?” (By the way, in the Middle East, it’s very seldom that you see clouds. It’s mostly cloudless skies.) God said, “That’s the number of children you will have.”

Abraham said, “Praise the Lord!” Genesis

15:6:

Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.

Well, two more years pass by, and Sarah, his wife, comes to Abraham and says, “You know, I think God needs help. Let’s face it, it’s now 10 years. He did mention two years ago that the child will come from you, but he mentioned nothing about me. The fact is, you are still okay, but I am not. I’m getting old. The doctors are beginning to tell me, ‘Forget the dream.’ God needs help, because people are laughing at our God. Why don’t we do something?”

They did practice surrogate motherhood in those days; they just used different methods. Sarai said, “Abraham, I have a suggestion. You go to my Egyptian handmaid, produce a child, and help God. We’re tired of people talking about God’s inability.”

And Abraham said, “That’s an excellent idea.”

He meant well. I know that he was at least 85 years old because the last part of Gen.16:3 says this took place 10 years after he came into Canaan. He was at least 85 years old; his wife was 75. Well, he produced Ishmael. And he took Ishmael to God and said, “God, here is your promised son.”

God said, “No. I didn’t ask for your help. I asked you to believe my promise, period!” And you know what God did? He waited, not eight years, not 10 years, but 14 more years, until it was scientifically, medically, humanly impossible for Sarah to have a child.

God now comes to Abraham [turn to Genesis chapter 17]. When Abraham was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abraham and said to him, “I am Almighty God.” Do you know what the word “almighty” means? “I can do anything!”

God said, “I am Almighty God. Walk before me and be perfect” (or “blameless” as the Hebrew puts it). Now please read that statement, that word “blameless” or “perfect,” in its context. He is not

talking about being blameless in performance; He is talking about being blameless in faith. You see, he had faulty faith. There were obstacles in his faith. God wanted to remove them. What He's asking Abraham is, "Please, I want a faith that is unshakeable. I want you to have faith in me irrespective of what the scientists say, of what your neighbors say, what your doctor says." Then in Genesis 17:4-5 I read:

"As for me [that's God speaking], this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram ["exalted father"]; your name will be Abraham ["the father of a multitude"], for I have made you a father of many nations.

Then God entered into a covenant relationship. Genesis 17:9:

Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come."

Now here we have a problem. What did God mean when He said to Abraham, “You will keep this covenant, but not only you, even your descendants”? Did he mean his literal descendants or did he mean his spiritual descendants? Which ones? Look at the covenant. Genesis 17:10:

This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised.

Do Adventists practise that? Some do. In Africa, they do it as part of their culture. If you haven't been circumcised, does it mean that you are not a child of Abraham? Look at verse 11:

You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

Have you got it? Circumcision was to be “the sign of the covenant between me and you.” It is not the actual covenant, but it is the sign of the covenant. What did the sign represent? That's where the Jews failed. They took the sign and

made it the reality. In fact, one of the first theological controversies in the Christian church was over circumcision. Acts 15, where the Judaizers said to the Christians in Antioch, “Unless you are circumcised as you read in Genesis 17, you cannot be saved.”

Paul and Barnabas fought like cats and dogs. They said, “Nothing doing! We will not allow such a theology to creep into the Christian church.” Well, they couldn’t solve that problem, so they had the first General Conference. And I thank God, that Peter, James, and John, the pillars of the church, defended the theology of Paul. You should read chapter 15 of Acts sometime.

What did the covenant signify, what did it symbolize? I’ll give you two texts. One is Moses’ statement where he corrects the misunderstanding, in Deuteronomy 10:16:

Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer.

The other one is Jeremiah 4:4:

Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done — burn with no one to quench it.

Both these texts are saying the same thing. What God is asking in truth is to circumcise your heart. In other words, remove unbelief. “Abraham, you have had doubts about Me and My promise. I want you to remove all your doubts. I want you to take Me at My word. And I’m going to enter into a covenant with you.”

I want now to turn to the New Testament and give you the New Testament application of circumcision. Of course, Paul is the great interpreter. Turn to Philippians 3:3. What does Paul say there? Talking to the Christian church in Philippi, which is made up primarily of Gentiles, he says:

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh [in our own human ability]....

So the true circumcision, the act, simply symbolized a truth. It is not the act that saves you, it is the truth. And what is the truth? “Not I, but Christ.”

Go now to a passage that you need to analyze because it’s a difficult passage; at least, it’s caused problems in interpretation. But I want to point out to you the background. Colossians 2:11:

In him [Christ] you were also circumcised [past tense, talking to believers], in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ....

That applies to both men and women. Then in verse 12, he links this truth with baptism. Baptism, today, has the same meaning as circumcision did in

the Old Testament. It is saying, “Not I, but Christ.” Colossians 2:12:

...having been buried with him in baptism [because when Christ died on the cross He died to sin, we covered this in Romans 6] and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Now, that is what Abraham’s faith stands for, folks. It’s faith without any doubt. Now I’m going to give you two statements. These two statements will disagree with rationality, disagree with scientific method, but I want you to remember, Abraham did not ask for scientific proof. He believed against all hope. The two statements are found, one in Romans, one in Galatians. Romans 13:14:

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Galatians 5:16:

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Do you believe, on the basis of those two statements, that God can give you total victory over sin? Do you believe that? The issue is not, “Show me somebody!” or “I have tried and I have failed.” Abraham tried for 25 years and failed to produce a child. But when God came to him when it was impossible by trying, he believed. Do you believe what God says in His word? That’s the issue, that is what qualifies you and me to be a child of Abraham.

Abraham stands for faith that is unshakeable. How do I know it? Because after He entered into this covenant and gave him a child the next year — Isaac, who we will study next — 17 years later, when Isaac was a young strapping teenager, God said to Abraham, “Kill him!” Let’s read it, as we conclude. Hebrews 11:17, this is what God said to Abraham:

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only [which means special] son....

God said to him, “Take that son, in whom I’m going to bless the whole world, and kill him!”

Did Abraham say, “Well, if I kill him, how are you going to keep the promise?” No, Abraham did not question God. This is what he rationalized in his mind. Hebrews 11:19:

Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

In other words, “If God gave me Isaac when it was impossible, God can raise him up. No problem, God. You want me to kill him, I’ll kill him. I know one thing: your promise never fails. And I believe you, God, that you will keep your promise.”

Can God produce such a people today? I mean, we have more evidence that Abraham had. Why can't we believe God when He says, "You are my child"? Why can't you believe God when He says, "I look at you as if you had never sinned"?

"But I feel a sinner." I don't care what you feel, folks. What does God say? John 5:24:

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

"He who believes in Jesus Christ has already passed from death to life." Do you believe that?

Abram was the father of the literal Jews. Abraham is the father of all believers.

I want to conclude with Galatians 3:6-9. I want you to listen to this very carefully, because here is the sum of the matter. Galatians 3:6:

Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

How was Abraham righteous? Not by performance, but by believing God’s promise. Galatians 3:7-8:

Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles [not singular, but plural, it includes every nation in this world] by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”

Did Abraham know the gospel? Sure enough. Not as a literal fact, but as a promise. Galatians 3:9:

So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

If you believe that God has redeemed you, if you believe that God has given you a new history,

a new identity in which you have already been justified unto life, you are Abraham's child. If you believe that God can dominate you through His Spirit and give you total victory over sin, you are a child of God. God is not asking you for performance; He's asking you for faith. He does the performance: first in Christ and then in you.

All He's saying is, "I want a people who will believe My word without a shadow of a doubt."

Whether it comes in terms of justification, or whether it comes in terms of sanctification, or whether it comes in terms of glorification, my part, your part is faith alone! God does everything else. He justifies the ungodly, thank God for that. He sanctifies the believer, and He glorifies us at the end of time.

It is my prayer that you will do what Paul did, the one whom God used to expound this truth. Paul's name used to be Saul. As Saul, he was a son of Abraham and a persecutor of the Christian church. But when he found the gospel, do you

know what he said? “I take all my righteousness, all my attainment, even my inheritance as a child of Abraham, and I count it as dung, as refuse, that I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having my righteousness but His, which is mine through faith alone.” And when he did that, he changed his name from Saul to Paul.

It is my prayer that you will change your name, not literally, because there are legal ramifications in this country, but you will change your position from doubt to belief. And it is my prayer that each one of you will be a true child of God, through faith alone.

Chapter 27

The True Israelite, Part 3

(Romans 9:6-13)

The fundamental issue in the three chapters of 9, 10, and 11 of Romans is, if some Jews are going to be lost as the New Testament writers declare, even Jesus Christ, then hasn't God failed to keep his promise? He promised Israel and the fathers of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that all Israel will be saved. If all Jews are not saved, then God has failed to keep His promise. As we have seen in the past two chapters, the answer of Paul is an emphatic "No." But you can only understand Paul's answer when you realize what he is trying to get across, especially in chapter nine. That is, that God's promise was that all spiritual Israel will be saved. In other words, not the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob constitute Israel in God's eyes, but the spiritual descendants of these three men. The question is, "What do these three men represent?"

We saw in our last study that Abraham represents faith. Now, I want to turn to Isaac. He represents the new birth, the second prerequisite to being an Israelite. In the next study we will look at Jacob, who represents the perseverance of the saints whose faith endures unto the end.

The only thing special about Isaac was not something that he did or performed. The only thing special about him recorded in scripture was his birth. God has a very special lesson for us. Let us begin with Romans 9. We will look at three verses but we will concentrate on verse 8 here. Let us start at verse 6 to get the whole context. In Romans 9:6, Paul says that God has not failed to keep His word but it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. God has not failed to keep His promise, but here are the facts:

It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.

In other words, it is not the natural, or Israel

according to the flesh, that constitutes God's elect. Then in Romans 9:7 he says:

Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children....

Just because you may have Abraham's blood in you doesn't make you a child of God. Ishmael was a child of Abraham. So what constitutes true Israel? Look at the last part of verse seven:

...On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

He's quoting from the Old Testament and He's saying, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." Then he explains that in Romans 9:8:

In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.

What does Paul mean by that? He spends a whole section in Galatians 4 explaining. Before we

turn to Galatians, I think we need to be familiar with the background. Paul is taking for granted that his readers understand the Old Testament. (In Paul's day, there was no New Testament.) Let me give you a couple of texts that we need to be clear about concerning Isaac. The first one is Gen. 12:4:

So Abram left, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he set out from Haran.

There we are told that Abraham was 75 years old when God came to him and called him out of his country and from his pagan environment and promised him that he would be the father of a special nation. God promised him that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed. He was 75 years old. Abraham had no children when the promise came so the promise was through his son Isaac, who was still to come.

Then turn to Genesis 21. There we are told how old Abraham was when the promised son

actually came. He was 75 when the promise was made and 100 years old when the promise was fulfilled. I read it in Gen. 21:5:

Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Why did God wait 25 years to keep His promise? It was very embarrassing, very frustrating. It was very hard for Abraham to wait that long. Why did God wait 25 long years? Is it because God was incapable of giving him a son earlier? The answer is, “No.” Because He gave him a son when it was impossible to get a son by the natural means. But why did God wait 25 years? Well, there is only one reason. It was essential for Abraham to be exhausted in terms of producing a son. When the natural ability to produce a son through Sarah had come to an end, then and only then God said, “I will give you a son.” That is because Isaac represents something very special: he represents those who, like him, are born not the natural way but from above.

This is a lesson that Jesus tried to teach Nicodemus. Turn to John 3 and listen to a dialogue that took place. Nicodemus was one of the theologians of Judaism. He was a member of the Sanhedrin. If he was living today he probably would be a professor at Walla Walla College or maybe Andrews University. He was one of the members of the Sanhedrin. He with his church had gone astray in terms of the truth as it is in Christ. But He recognized in Jesus Christ a very special person. So he comes to Jesus at night. He says, “Jesus, nobody could do such miracles as you are doing unless he was from God.”

Jesus ignored his question and, in John 3:3, Jesus answered and said:

I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

In other words, you cannot belong to God by natural birth, you have to be born again. This made no sense to Nicodemus. His theological school had not studied the new birth issue. So

Nicodemus asked in John 3:4:

How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!

Nicodemus had missed the point. Jesus was not talking about a second natural birth. And so Jesus answered in John 3:5:

I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

Water represents baptism and baptism represents burial. "The natural life must go," says Christ, "that the new life might come. It is not a repetition of the old life. It is a new life in exchange for the old." Then, in John 3:6, Jesus makes it very clear:

Flesh gives birth to flesh...

The flesh life cannot change. That's all it will

be. It is born flesh, it will be flesh, and it will die flesh.

...but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

They are two different things. You can't mix the two. This is what Isaac represents. Let me put it this way: God told Adam and Eve in Gen. 2:17 that the day they sinned they would die. We know that Adam and Eve did not die the day they sinned, i.e., they did not die physically. Their physical life did not die that day. It began the processes of death but it did not die. But Adam and Eve did die that same day. They died spiritually. The Holy Spirit, which was dwelling in them, left them and their life was plunged into darkness. And since God had established a law that each would produce its own kind, the children that Adam produced were born spiritually dead. I read this, for example, in Ephesians 2:1:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins....

What he meant was, “You were dead spiritually.” Then in verse five he adds:

[God] made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

Even when we were dead spiritually, he made us alive together with Christ. Here he is not referring to our experience; he is referring to an objective truth that took place in Christ when Divinity was united to humanity. You see, the humanity that Christ took came from Mary. It was spiritually dead, but the moment that it was united with the Divinity of Christ, it became spiritually alive. That, by the way, is the basis of the new birth experience. In other words, we experience nothing in the Christian life apart from the finished work of Christ. The new birth was not something added to Christ’s earthly mission. It was the beginning of His earthly mission when divinity and humanity were joined together in the womb of Mary.

But, because we are naturally born spiritually dead, we have a problem, and the problem is found in Romans 7:14. Here Paul gives us the problem:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I [that's a corporate "I," referring to every human being born in this world] am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

In other words, my natural life is a slave to sin. In fact Romans 7:5 brings this out:

For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.

In other words, our natural life does not have the capacity, the ability to keep the law of God. Why? Because the law is spiritual and my natural flesh life is carnal. He brings this out clearly in Romans 8:7:

...The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

So here am I born with flesh, a life that is enmity with God, a life that is sold under sin, a life that can never please God. And here was Nicodemus trying to please God through his natural life. He had failed and he was coming to God at night for some counsel.

When we were in Ethiopia, we were acquainted with a young man. He was a Communist professor. In other words, he taught Marxism during the special sessions that they had. He was an instructor of Marxist philosophy. But there were questions he had in his mind, so he would come to us at night. My wife nicknamed him Nicodemus. She was not sure whether he was genuine or if he was a spy to get hold of me so they could get rid of me. I was willing to take the risk because I knew that if he is really searching, then he needs to know the gospel. I studied with him several nights. He would only come at night because he dared not come to a pastor in the daytime. He was a Marxist. He was an atheist outwardly.

When we left Ethiopia a few years later, I wondered if anything happened out of this. Years later we received a letter while we were in the States and he said, “By the way, I want you to know that I have accepted Christ and have been baptized.” The same thing happened to Nicodemus. Do you know that he became a follower of Christ after the resurrection?

So please remember that there are men and women out there who are searching because they have tried. There are our own people who have tried to be good by their natural powers. They have made promises. They have made resolutions and they have discovered that the law is spiritual but they are carnal. Well, I have good news for you. The natural life can never please God. That is why Jesus said, “Nicodemus, your foundation is wrong. You need to be born again.” You need to be a child of Isaac. That’s the whole issue.

Now, because of what Christ has done, He has given us a new hope. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians

15:50 that flesh and blood — by that he means this natural life with which we are born through Adam, that we receive through our parents — this flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God:

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Do you know why? Because corruption cannot inherit incorruption. That's why there will be a change.

In the incarnation, God made the new birth possible for the human race but the new birth becomes a reality in you and me when we have experienced conversion. When do you become a child of Isaac? Turn to 1 Peter as well as 2 Peter. I'm going to read chapter one of both epistles. In 1 Peter 1:3:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the

resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...

You see, Christ took our condemned life and surrendered that life to the cross where it died, and, in exchange, he gave us His own life so that we could rise again in newness of life. That's what Christ accomplished. Now Peter is saying, "Thank God, bless His name, praise His name, for giving us a new hope with a new life which became ours, was offered to the human race, through the resurrection of Christ." Then in verses 4 and 5 he says:

...And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade — kept in heaven for you [i.e., those who accepted these promises], who through faith are shielded by God's power [please notice it is God who keeps you, not you; our part is faith] until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

In other words, salvation is ours who are Isaac's children through a promise. We are the children of the promise. The reality will take place

at the second coming of Christ. Now turn to 2 Peter 1:2:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

I could preach a whole sermon on that text. I'll tell you why. There are many who think that the way to build up Christians is to give them instructions on do's and don'ts. But Peter says here that grace and peace are multiplied through the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ. That's why I believe in expository preaching, that you may have increased knowledge, because it gives you better hope and peace and stronger power. "You shall know the truth," says Jesus, "and the truth shall make you free." And we are learning the truth of the new birth today. Verse three:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them

you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

This new life gives you two wonderful things:

1. It gives you eternal life.
2. It gives you godliness.

Through this new life you are able to reflect the character of God. Not only heaven is yours but godliness is yours through this new life.

Please notice it is the knowledge of Christ that gives us exceedingly great and precious promises. You may be part of that new life that Christ gave to you on the cross. So conversion is a new experience.

Conversion is giving up something you have in exchange for something you want. You were born with the natural life: a life that is sold under sin, a life that is incapable of keeping God's law, a life that stands condemned, a life that must die. That is what you were born with. That is your natural

inheritance. And now God says, “I have made a way of escape. You can give this up in exchange for the life of my Son, which is righteous, which is immortal, which gives you the right to stand just before God’s law.” And if you refuse it, all I can say is you need to see a doctor. Only a fool will reject such an exchange or somebody who is crazy in the mind. But some of us have not understood the good news.

When you accept Christ, you become a partaker of the divine nature. You are a new person, a born again person in Christ. The issue is not whether you have your name in the books of the church. That won’t save you. It is whether you have the new life in Christ that qualifies you to be a child of Isaac.

With this background, let us turn to Galatians 4. Galatians was the province of Galatia. The churches there were evangelized by Paul himself through the preaching of the gospel. But after he left, some false teachers called Judaizers came and said to them, “You know, Paul gave you an

incomplete gospel. He told you that you have to accept Christ to be your Righteousness. That is not enough. It is only part of the truth. The other part is that you must be circumcised and keep the law. It is not enough simply to accept the gift. The gift is incomplete. You must also do something.” And the poor Galatians fell for the trap.

I remember several years ago, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was an African from South Africa, an ex-pastor who was disfellowshipped and his credentials were removed. He came to our churches in Kenya and he said to them, “You know, the missionaries brought to you the gospel but they brought to you only half the truth. They have not brought to you the other half.”

Our people said, “What’s the other half?”

He said, “The sanctuary message.”

You see, our people were not preaching the sanctuary message in the 1970s because of Brinsmead. They were afraid to be labelled as a

Brinsmead so they kind of pushed that message down. So this African said, “I am going to bring you the sanctuary message. They will give you one half and I will give you the other half. Therefore, you pay the church half tithe and pay me half tithe.” What a bargain! And they fell for it. This man went back to South Africa quite rich. Anyway, here the Galatians were trapped into what we call Galatianism: “partly by Christ and partly by your works.”

When Paul heard about that, he did not waste time. He sat right down and wrote this letter to the Galatians. This is a book that we as a people need to understand. Many Adventists are trapped in Galatianism. That’s why it was the main book used in 1888. Paul wrote his hardest letter in Galatians. In Galatians 4:21, he is asking the Galatians a question:

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says?

Now there are two systems that you can be

under. If you read Romans 6:14, Paul tells us there that the born again Christian is no longer under the law but under grace. Why? Because in chapter seven he says we have died in the body of Christ under the law. He did not mean that the law was done away with. He simply meant that we are no longer living under the jurisdiction of the law.

What does it mean to be under the law? It means to live under its rulership. The word “under” means “to be ruled by.” How does the law rule a person? Well, it is very simple. The law says, “If you obey me perfectly, you may live. But if you disobey me, even in one point, only one, you are under the curse.” If you don’t believe me, read Galatians 3:10 where Paul quotes [from Deuteronomy 27:26] the law:

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

So Paul is saying to these Galatians, “You who

desire to be under the law, don't you know what is found in the book of the law? Do you not hear the law?"

The people in Paul's day did not make that big distinction that we do: moral law, ceremonial law, health laws, and civil law — all of them were under one umbrella called "The Book of the Law." And in the book of the law, in the book of Genesis, which is the first book of the law, there is the story of Abraham. Paul refers to this in Gal.4:22:

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.

Notice how Paul defines the wife of Abraham: he calls Sarah "the free woman." (So men, please don't make your wives slaves.) God looks at the real wife as a natural woman. He looks at the surrogate wife, that is Hagar, as a bondwoman. She was a slave; in fact, she was a slave of Sarah. Now, why does Paul bring up Abraham's two sons? In Galatians 4:23 he says:

His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

Abraham did not produce Isaac. He couldn't. It was medically, scientifically impossible. Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. That was absolutely clear. Isaac was born according to the promise of God. Now, having reminded them of these facts, Paul goes on to Galatians 4:24:

These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: this is Hagar.

This is an allegory or symbolic; these things have spiritual significance. Ishmael represents those who are under the law. Why? Because the old covenant made at Mt. Sinai was the following: God gave the law at Mt. Sinai and the people said, "All that You have said we will do."

In other words, the old covenant is where God gives the law and man promises to keep and fulfill that law. And if he fails? To use a good German word, “kaput.” That’s the end of him. Galatians 4:25:

Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.

Hagar represents legalism, which the Jews are still under in Jerusalem. In 1980, I had a workers’ meeting with the pastors of Egypt. I tried to give them the gospel because, if you want legalism at its very best, go to the Middle East. The place the gospel began is where the falling away has taken place most. As an appreciation for my studies, they gave me a trip to Mount Sinai and I’ll tell you what I saw: nothing but barren rocks and rocks and rocks.

One dear, dear monk many years ago, who was a real Galatianist, carved out of those rocks steps from Mt. Catherine right to the top of Sinai. It

took thirty years. I thanked him for the steps because it made it easier for me to climb. But he did it as a way of salvation. He thought that God would give him a special ticket to heaven for spending thirty years carving those steps on the rocks.

There are some Adventists who are like that, who have tried and tried to go to heaven under the law. If you are doing that you belong to Ishmael, not to Isaac. For I read in Galatians 4:26:

But the Jerusalem that is above [God's children] is free, and she is our mother.

“Our” means both Jews and Gentiles who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Then you have this famous quotation [Isaiah 54:1]:

Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child....

Are you barren? Have you tried to be good and have failed? That's because the natural life “does

not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." If you want to be godly, if you want to please God, then the only life that can do it is the life of Christ that comes in you through the new birth experience. And in this context he says in Gal.4:28:

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

But he doesn't stop there. He introduces another problem which I will discuss in detail in our next study but will only introduce today. When you accept Christ by faith, which is Abraham's child, then the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in you and you become now a child of Isaac; you experience the new birth. But the old life that you were born with, the natural life that is under sin, doesn't disappear. You have said goodbye to it by faith and faith is not reality. So actually a born-again Christian lives two lives: the flesh and the spirit. And these two lives are a contradiction to each other. In fact, in Galatians 5:17 Paul brings this out:

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

In other words, there can be no partnership between flesh and Spirit. Both these are trying to dominate you. That is a struggle you will go through all of your life, even after probation closes. I'm not saying you will fall, but I am saying that the flesh and the Spirit will continually struggle in you. When will you get peace? Not until the second coming of Christ or until we bury you physically in the grave. That struggle will go on.

What I want you to know today is what your attitude toward the flesh should be. Look at Gal.4:29:

At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

In other words, he is taking the literal incident

in Abraham's life and he applies it to the Christian life and says the struggle between the two also will be experienced by you.

Go back to Genesis 21 to get the whole picture. In verse 5, we read that Abraham was a hundred years old when he Isaac. He was approximately 85 or 86 when he had Ishmael. So Ishmael was a young teenager when Isaac was born. I want you to get the picture. As long as Isaac was not born, Ishmael was number one and when the doctors announced that Sarah can no longer have children, I can imagine Hagar sighing a sigh of relief. "Now my son is permanently number one." Well, she had bad news because one year later Isaac was born. You can imagine how she felt.

Isaac was born and then he was weaned and now I want you to go to Gen. 21:8. This incident is important because it also has spiritual significance. Paul is taking for granted that we are familiar with the background. Since we are not, living 2,000 years later, we need to remind ourselves. Gen. 21:8,9:

The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking....

Some Bibles say mocking and some say scoffing, some say laughing and some say joking, but the Hebrew text says, “He was teasing him maliciously.” “You rascal, why were you born? Don’t you realize that you have put an end to my wonderful hope?” So what did Sarah do when she saw Ishmael mistreating her son Isaac? Verse 10:

...And she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

The two cannot dwell in the same camp. And Abraham didn’t said, “Sarah, that’s an excellent idea.” No, folks, I want you to notice how Abraham reacted. When Sarah said to Abraham, “Please go to Hagar and produce a child,”

Abraham said, “That’s a wonderful idea.” He never even consulted God. But when Sarah says, “Get rid of this woman and her son....” Verse 11:

The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.

“This is my own flesh and blood; I produced him. I can’t get rid of him; he is mine.”

We have the same problem with our self-righteousness. This is something we produced. But there is no way that self-righteousness can be mixed with Christ’s righteousness. It is all of Him or none of Him. So he took it to God, hoping that God would agree with him. Listen to what God said to Abraham in verse 12:

But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.

“Whatever Sarah says to you, this time, listen

to her voice for in Isaac your seed shall be called. She is right this time. She was wrong the first time and you never consulted me but this time she is right.” Paul takes this in Galatians 4:29-30:

At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. [The flesh will give you no peace. It will want to dominate you all your life.] But what does the Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.”

If you want the application, look at Gal.5:24:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Every day, tell the flesh it belongs to the cross: “Not I, but Christ.” So Paul concludes in Gal.4:31:

Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the

slave woman, but of the free woman.

So my question today is not “Are you a member of the Adventist Church?” Not “Is your name in the books?” Not “Have you been physically baptized?” My question is, “Are you a born-again Christian?” If you are not, all these other things are of no value because only the children of Isaac, those who are born from above, have a right to the kingdom of God. First, you must believe the gospel. Secondly, you must surrender to the gospel by faith. And the surrender means: “Not I but Christ.” In other words, “I am crucified with Christ but I am still living. It is not I. The life that I now live I live through that which I receive from Isaac which is the new life in Christ.”

Our next study will discuss the struggle that Jacob went through. It was not until Jacob’s faith prevailed that his name was changed from Jacob to Israel. It is my prayer that your faith will endure unto the end also. May God bless you.

Chapter 28

The True Israelite, Part 4

(Romans 9:6-13)

We are studying the three fathers of Israel in the context of Romans 9. Let's begin at Romans 9. The key text in this chapter is verse 6:

It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.

Here Paul tells us two things:

1. God has not failed to keep His promise. We have looked into this in our last three studies.
2. Not everyone who belongs to Israel is part of Israel. That is, not every one who belongs to natural Israel — that is, the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — really belongs to true Israel. As he

mentioned in Romans 2:28,29:

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

As we have said, to be part of Israel you have to have the spiritual qualities of these three fathers.

We have already touched on Abraham. Abraham stands for faith. I want to remind you of the words of Jesus to the Jewish nation. In John 8:56, this is what Jesus said to the Jews:

Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.

You see, Abraham represents faith and being a Christian begins with faith. (And, by the way, it ends with faith, too.) Faith is obeying the call of

God as it is in Christ. Abraham obeyed God and he became the father of all like him who believe.

This genuine faith results in what we call the new birth, regeneration, being born of the Spirit or being born from above like Isaac was. Isaac was the result of a faith relationship with Jesus Christ. In the new birth experience, the Holy Spirit, who represents Christ, comes and dwells in you. In fact, in Romans 8:9 Paul tells us that he who does not have the Spirit of Christ doesn't belong to Christ. Now in Galatians 4:28, which we saw in our last study in which we dealt with Isaac, Paul tells us that:

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

We believers, who are born again as Isaac was, are the children of the promise. If you have experienced the new birth, you are part and parcel of true Israel. But Israel doesn't stop there. God gave a third father. But before we go to the third father, which is Jacob, there is one thing that we

need to be clear on that takes place in our lives as a result of the new birth experience. The new birth brings about a radical change in every one of us and in at least four areas:

1. In terms of citizenship,
2. In terms of status,
3. In terms of dominion, and
4. In terms of nature.

I want to touch on this before we go on to Jacob.

1. Citizenship

Please turn to John 15 and notice what Jesus says to His disciples. What he says to His disciples is true of each one of us. John 15:19:

If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

The call that God gives you in Christ is to be separated from the world and become part of His kingdom. In other words, when we were born we were born citizens of this world which, speaking spiritually, is under Satan. When we accepted Christ, there was a change in citizenship. We have changed our citizenship through the new birth experience from under the world to citizenship in the Kingdom of God, which is now under Christ. For example, in Philippians 3:20-21, if you look at a modern translation, it says:

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Turn to 1 John 5:19 and you will notice that, ultimately, the whole human race is divided into only two camps. There will be no three camps, only two camps, and each one of us will belong to one or the other. Talking to believers, the apostle

John says:

We know that we are children of God [i.e., we Christians who have experienced the new birth, who by faith have become one with Christ are belonging to God], and that the whole world [that's the rest of the world] is under the control of the evil one.

In other words, we Christians are under Christ, His kingdom. We are children of God and the rest of the world is still under the sway of the wicked one. So, number one, the radical change is in citizenship.

2. Status

There's a radical change in status. In Romans 3:19, Paul tells us the whole world is guilty. The whole world (in Romans 5) stands condemned. We are by birth and by performance under condemnation of death; but when we accept Christ we experience subjectively what is already true of

us in Christ and that is: we move our status from condemnation to death to justification to life. That is, the legal justification that Christ accomplished on the cross becomes effective. Turn to John 3:36:

Whoever believes in the Son has [please notice the verb: not WILL have, but ALREADY has] eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

The wrath of God is, of course, good-bye to life forever. Another text that brings this out clearly is in John 5:24:

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word [who hears the call of the gospel] and believes him who sent me has [past tense] eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over [past tense] from death to life.

When you experience the new birth, you have passed from condemnation to justification, from death unto life. So this is the second wonderful change that takes place in the new birth experience.

3. Dominion

The third change is in dominion and this one is a bit hard. It is hard for us who uphold the law because we have not understood the distinction between the law as a standard of Christian living and the law as a ruler. As I mentioned, in Romans 3:19 Paul tells us that:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

The whole world under the law stands condemned, guilty before God. But the good news is for those who are believers, those who are the children of Abraham and Isaac. I read in Romans 6:14:

For sin shall not be your master, because you [i.e., you believers, you Christians] are not under

law, but under grace.

Briefly, that means that the law no longer rules over the Christian. Do you know what it means to be ruled by the law? It means several things:

- A. It means that you have to obey the law perfectly in every detail. If you fail once, the law will condemn you.
- B. It means that nobody else can do anything for you. The law demands the individual who is under it to obey.
- C. It means that the law does not know how to sympathize with you or to help you. The law can command but it cannot sympathize, it cannot help.

So this is what it means to be under the law. But Christians are no longer under the law. Yes, the law is still there as a standard of Christian living, but we are no longer under it. We are under grace. And chapter seven of Romans, which we

have already covered, deals with this. It talks in verse four and six about this change of status. Look at Romans 7:4:

So, my brothers, you also died to the law...

Please notice how God delivered us from under the law. He did not deliver us from under the law by doing away with the law. That is a heresy. What He did away with was us. We died to the law. Not that the law died. We died. How?

...through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

It is only under grace that we can bear fruit. Romans 7:6:

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit [that is the new birth experience], and not in the old way of the written code.

What does Paul mean by “the old way of the written code”? He means serving out of fear. Serving as a requirement. Serving as in do’s and don’ts. But under grace we serve God, not because we have to but because we love Jesus Christ. We do not serve Him out of fear but we serve Him out of love. And that is the change of status that we have come under.

I want to give you one more text about this. Turn to Galatians. Galatians also deals with this issue in chapter four. Read first Galatians 3:24-25 where Paul talks of the law as our school master or custodian that we are under:

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

But when we come to Christ we are no longer under that schoolmaster. Now look at Gal. 4:4-6:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law...

Christ came where we are. He joined Himself to us under the law. Why did He do it? Verse five:

...to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Have you got it? We have been redeemed from under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons. And then in verse six:

Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”

That’s the new birth experience (Isaac). You have been born from above and now you are a child of God. You can cry to God, not in fear, but call Him “Dear Father,” because Christ has adopted us into that family.

4. Nature

Then we come to number four. The next radical change we have is in terms of nature. Please turn to 2 Peter. There is a radical change in nature and you need to be aware of that. You know, through Christ, God has given us some wonderful promises. Listen here to what Peter says. 2 Peter 1:4:

Through these [i.e., through the promise of the gospel, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ] he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Please notice that we become partakers of the divine nature in the new birth experience.

So there are four radical changes. But remember in John 3:6, Jesus said to Nicodemus:

Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

You need to be born from above, you need to be a child of Isaac, you need to be born of the Spirit. That's in John 3:3-8. But these radical changes bring about some real problems, and you must be aware of these problems, because Jacob represents the struggle that is the outcome of the problem. And the main problem that you will face as a born again Christian is that you have become an active participant, you have become a part of the firing line, you have become actively involved in the great controversy between Satan and Christ. And that is what the experience of Jacob is all about.

You see, when you become a Christian, you change your citizenship from the world, under Satan, to the Kingdom of God, under Christ. But you are still living in Satan's territory. You are still living in the world. In John 17:15, Jesus prayed to His Father. He said:

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one.

If Satan hates anything, he hates losing a citizen. He gets mad when you change your citizenship. Some time ago I was looking at the news. There was a young man who had sold some of the secrets of the United States government to the Russian government. He was caught and this news item was showing him coming out of a car handcuffed to a policeman. What impressed me was the Americans standing around that car who were watching him. They were mad. They were mad because he was a traitor. That's exactly how Satan, the ruler of this world, looks at you when you become a Christian: "You're a traitor and I'm going to make life hell for you."

Now the experience in this struggle is really the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. When you are born again, what happens is your citizenship changes, your status changes but you still have the flesh. Yes, in your mind you have said "goodbye" to the flesh, but in reality it is still there and it will be there until the second coming of Christ. So the unconvertible flesh and the Spirit,

which now dwells in you, are in constant struggle. Paul brings this out in Galatians 5:17. He talks about the flesh and the Spirit being contrary to each other:

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

This struggle between the flesh and the Spirit is what Jacob is all about. No other Bible character represents more fully the spiritual battle, the conflict in the lives of the saints between the flesh and the Spirit than does the life of Jacob. You read his history. At times we see him sinking down to the depths of despondency and despair. At other times he rises up to the glorious heights of the kingdom of God. It's up and down.

Has your Christian experience been up and down? Don't be discouraged. You are going through Jacob's experience. The wonderful thing about Jacob is that he prevailed. He finally

emerged at the very last upon the plains of triumphant faith. Then, and then only, did God change his name from Jacob, which, by the way, means “schemer,” to Israel, “the one who prevailed.”

I want to look at Jacob by first turning to Romans 9 because that’s the context of our study. Then we’ll go quickly through his life and come to a conclusion. Having made the statement in Romans 9:6 that not all who are of Israel belong to true Israel, Paul takes us step by step. He goes through Abraham. He goes through Isaac. Then, finally, he deals with Jacob. Jacob is dealt with in Romans 9:10-13:

Not only that [not only must you be a child of Abraham and Isaac], but Rebekah’s children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad — in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls — she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but

Esau I hated.”

To appreciate what Paul is saying here, you must be familiar with the background. We don't practice today the birthright system as the Jews did. The first-born had the birthright in the Jewish culture. That meant special privileges. One of the privileges was, of course, that he got a double portion of the inheritance. If there were three sons, the father would divide his inheritance into four parts. The first son would get two of the parts and the rest would get one each.

But in the case of Jacob and Esau, the issue was not so much the inheritance. The issue was the promise of God. Remember what God promised to Abraham and then carried on to Isaac? Genesis 12:3:

...All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

In other words, what God promised Abraham was that one of his children — one of his

descendants — would be the Messiah. This was, of course, the greatest privilege that any man could have. This privilege was passed on, not to Ishmael but to Isaac, he who was born from above.

According to the Jewish culture, according to the law of the land, this privilege should have been passed on to Esau. Why? Because he was the first born. But God was trying to teach a lesson and that lesson is that the promise of God is not based on natural inheritance or through works, something you do, but according to the promise, the election of God.

Paul is not discussing here the salvation of all men but the New Testament tells us that God has called all people to be saved. When you read that text which has confused so many people, Matthew 22:14:

For many are invited, but few are chosen.

please remember that that is in the passive. It is not God who does the choosing. It is God who

does the calling. It is man who does the choosing. Many are called but few choose that call. That's what Jesus meant.

Did God offer Esau the promise? Yes. Did God offer Esau salvation? Yes. But what did Esau do with his birthright? He despised it. When you read Romans 9:13, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated," you must remember that's a quotation. It's a quotation from Malachi 1:1-3 and, in that context, God is saying to Malachi, "I have loved you, Israel. You don't deserve to be loved but I have loved you." And then it uses Jacob and Esau as an example.

What he is saying is, "Look, Esau deserved the birthright, but I gave it to Jacob." He is using this as an example, but please remember that the reason why Esau was rejected — because the word "hated" means "rejected" — was not because God said to Esau, "I will not save you." It was because Esau did not want the birthright. We will see this again in Hebrews.

Here is the problem. The promise that Jacob would have the birthright was made to Rebekah before Jacob was born. The problem is that all his life Jacob tried to fulfill God's promise. And that's the struggle; the flesh will be your greatest hindrance. I'll tell you why, because when God produces righteousness in you, who gets the credit? Not you, but Christ. And the flesh doesn't like that. The flesh doesn't like getting no credit.

In Africa, the "Third World," the majority of people who come into this church are brought in not by pastors or evangelists but by lay people. The lay workers are the ones who do the soul winning in Africa. I wish it was that way here [in the U.S.A], too. That's how it is in Africa. But here's the problem: it is not the laymen who baptize. It is the pastors who baptize. And when they photograph the baptized people with the pastor, the lay workers get no credit. Read the Review and Herald and see all those people baptized in Africa and see the pastor. It was not he who gave them the studies, it was the lay workers.

So the lay workers got together and they looked at their Bibles and they said, “In the Bible it doesn’t say that only pastors should baptize. Look at Philip. He was a deacon. He baptized. Why can’t we baptize?”

In a big committee meeting, I asked the laymen, “Are you fighting for your rights or are you fighting for the truth? Are you fighting for the flesh which wants to be honored or are you trying to uphold the word of God?” Well, they were not willing to answer that question.

The thing is this: “Is it the flesh or is it the Spirit?” The issue is not one or the other. The issue is: what is motivating you to do God’s will?

All his life, right from his birth, Jacob was trying to use the flesh to fulfill God’s promise. Do you remember what Jacob was doing when Esau was being born? He was holding onto his heel. Do you know what Jacob was saying to Esau? “You have no right to be born first. It’s me. Come back!”

Did he succeed? No. He failed miserably, because it was Esau who had the hair on the chest. Jacob was mother's boy. Then, a few years later, Esau went hunting. In those days, they did not have telescopic lenses, so he came back empty-handed. He was starving. (He didn't live in Kenya as I did. We never came back empty-handed. Thank God for the American government which stopped hunting in Africa. I don't know why I did it but it was the flesh in me that enjoyed to see an animal come down.)

Esau became hungry one day and he smelled lentil stew. I don't know what lentil stew here smells like compared to the Middle East. There people use a lot of spices and it does have a wonderful flavor. His stomach began to rumble because he was starving. And he said, "Jacob, can you share some of that lentil stew with me?"

Jacob had only one thought in mind: now was the opportunity to get the birthright. Why couldn't he trust in God's promise? Why was he scheming?

Because the flesh is always there, in your life and mine, to “try” and do God’s will. So he said, “Esau, I’ll give you some lentil stew on one condition: you give me the birthright.”

Esau said, “What good is the birthright if I’m dead?” So they came to an agreement and Jacob thought he had won. But after his stomach was full, Esau changed his mind.

Then we come to a third experience. You remember that Isaac, if he had his own way, would have given Esau the birthright. Isaac struggled with the flesh as did Jacob. Isaac only represents the new birth. You see, God takes each individual and gives him or her a definite experience but all three men faced the same dilemma. Each man stands out separately because of God’s purpose to demonstrate the qualifications of being a true Israelite.

Isaac wanted to bless his son Esau. Remember what Jacob’s mother did? She schemed with him and, finally, Isaac, by mistake because he was half

blind, blessed Jacob and gave him the birthright. Now the final barrier was removed since the last stage of the birthright fulfillment is when the father blesses his son. We would call it writing his will. But do you think the flesh took it sitting down? No way.

Esau said, “You are not going to get away with this alive.” So what did Jacob do? He fled for his life. Here is Jacob trying and trying and trying. Finally, he decides to come back home. All he can think of is Esau. If Jacob had only rested in Christ! 1 Thess. 5:24:

The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

Faithful is He who has called you. God doesn't want you to try to fulfill God's purpose in you but the flesh always wants to try. Gal.6:12:

Those who want to make a good impression outwardly are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to

avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.

“Those who want you to do this and that want it so that they can glory in the flesh.”

But I'll tell you, folks, that struggle is there. You can't help it. The flesh will not take second place sitting down.

Let us come to the final struggle. Jacob returned home. On the way, he prays to God earnestly and says to God, “Please help me through this experience.” And he begins planning once again. The flesh takes over. “How shall I appease Esau? I have an idea. I'll give him some good gifts.” Bribery and corruption. So he sends some gifts to his brother, hoping that it will appease him. Have you ever tried to appease God by your good works, hoping that God will not be angry at you? God says all the time, “I'm not angry with you. I love you. Why are you afraid of me?”

Then Jacob said, “What happens if Esau doesn't accept the gift?” So he took his family and

he put them on one side of Jabbok and he left them there and he went to the other side. Now, I'm sure that Esau had no desire to punish his wives and his children but I think Jacob had something in mind. I may be wrong, but I have a feeling, knowing the eastern mind, that he was saying to himself, "If Esau doesn't accept the gift, the next people he has to contend with are my family and I know what they will do. They will scream. That's my alarm bell and I'll take off. They have to cross the river before they reach me."

He had confessed. He had prayed. He was sincere, but he was still trying to use the flesh, conniving, scheming all the time. After he said his prayer, he went to sleep.

We had a missionary in Africa, a very good friend of mine. During the Mau Mau division in Kenya, they were killing all kinds of people and he was visiting in a school. This school had no walls, just poles. He looked around and saw fires, different houses being burnt, and here he had no protection; he had just taken his little sleeping bag.

So what he did was take a lot of pots and pans and put them at the entrance. He said, “If the Mau Mau come for me, they will hit against those pots and they will clamor and I will jump over and escape. So he went to sleep like Jacob. In the middle of the night, he heard this terrible clatter of noise and sweat began to pour down his brow. He thought the Mau Mau were coming for him and he had no courage to even stand up, he was so scared. There he was, waiting to be killed. And then slowly he put his hand under the bed and got the flashlight and waited. Finally, he shone the light towards the entrance and the pots and pans were still there. It had been a nightmare.

Well Jacob, after saying his prayer, made all provisions and went to sleep. Somebody touched him and guess whom he thought it was? He thought that he was so sound asleep that Esau had passed by the family and he hadn't heard a sound and now he was touching him. So his immediate reaction was to fight for his life, to defend himself.

Don't ask me how he did it. As a kid I used to

wrestle. I was still weightlifting and wrestling and boxing and I tell you if, you wrestle for five minutes it is pretty exhausting. He wrestled all night long. He must have been desperate, like the flesh normally is. Finally, at daybreak, he discovered that his enemy was really God who was coming to bless him, to give him assurance and hope. The mighty angel did something to him. I don't know how many of you have experienced the dislocation of any part of your body. It is very painful, excruciatingly painful. If I was wrestling with someone and he dislocated my hip, I would have let go. But did Jacob let go when he discovered who it was? Genesis 32:26:

...I will not let you go unless you bless me.

God said through the angel, "What is your name?" God knew his name.

Do you know what Jacob replied? "My name is schemer." The name "Jacob" means nothing to you but to the Jew it means "schemer." "I'm a crafty schemer."

God said, “I know that. But now, because you held unto Me and did not let go, even though you failed many times — the flesh has failed but you would not let go of me — I will bless you and I will change your name.”

God takes this experience and He applies it to the last generation of Christians. In Jer.30:7, where He talks of the great tribulation, He says, “This last generation of Christians will go through a time of trouble that has never been experienced by any other generation before. It is even like the time of Jacob’s trouble. And Jacob prevailed. Jer.30:7:

How awful that day will be! None will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it.

I want you to go to Matthew and see how Jesus applied this in Matthew 24. He, Jesus, is giving the prophecies of the last days in Matthew 24:9-11:

Then you will be handed over to be persecuted

and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other [within the church], and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.

This is a wonderful picture of what is happening today. There are offshoot movements by the dozen coming up and telling us to come out of the church to do this and that. All kinds of problems. Verse Matthew 24:12-13:

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end [through this time of trouble] will be saved.

Endure what? If you look at the passage carefully, you can divide it into three parts:

1. Those who endure persecution.
2. Those who endure the chastening of the Lord.
3. Those who endure false doctrines.

Let me amplify on these three points from scripture:

1. Enduring Persecution

In Matthew 10:17-22, Jesus said that father will betray son and mother will betray daughter and so on. You will be brought before governors and kings but he who endures unto the end shall be saved. Matthew 10:17-22:

Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Paul says the same thing in 2 Thessalonians 1:4:

Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

You must endure the persecution that will come one of these days.

2. Enduring the Chastening of the Lord

We are going through a refining process. God is refining Jacob. Do you know that? The Bible says so. And that refining process it is very painful. Turn to Hebrews 12:7:

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons....

Are you a child of Jacob? Then you must endure the chastening of the Lord. Is it pleasant? No.

...For what son is not disciplined by his father?

Chastening is never pleasant. But look at verse 11.

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

If you refuse the chastening of the Lord you will not endure. And I'll tell you, there are too many that do not endure the chastening of the Lord. It may come to you as a shock. Do you know that there are more nonattending Adventists in the North American Division than attending Adventists? There are more Adventists who do not attend church on Sabbath than those that attend. For every one of you here, there are more than one out there who are not attending church. This is a tragedy. This is not true in the Third World. It is the opposite but it is the tragedy in the North American Division. Where have we gone wrong?

Where have we failed to produce the Jacobs? It doesn't take much. All the pastor has to do is say a wrong word to a member and they stop coming to church. Or the school does something wrong and they stop coming to church. When will we learn to endure like Jacob did?

3. Enduring False Doctrine

And then, of course, there is the false versus sound doctrine. Please take two texts with you. The first is 2 Tim. 4:3-5:

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Because today there are many offshoot

movements who claim to be right and say, “Come out of Babylon,” when they themselves are in Babylon. Babylon is not a denomination. It is a system where self, the flesh, is still ruling. Ephesians 4:14 says the same thing:

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

But I won't tell you what Jacob did. I'm going to read you a quotation from *The Great Controversy*, page 523:

“Through humiliation, repentance, and self-surrender, this sinful, erring mortal prevailed with the Majesty of Heaven.”

That is the description of Jacob in *The Great Controversy*: “this sinful, erring mortal.” Have you got it? He was an erring mortal who “prevailed with the Majesty of Heaven.”

Yes, he was a failure in his own eyes, but he never gave up his faith in the promise of God. He held unto God and that is why he is remembered in the book of Hebrews. In chapter 11 of Hebrews, Paul gives us a string of men and women who went through all kinds of crises: men and women who were destitute, who were sawn in half, who were put in the lions den, but they all had one thing in common. They endured to the end. Their faith held on. Hebrews 11:39-40:

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

They did not give up. They held unto God. Then, in verses one and two of chapter 12, Paul makes this statement:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race

marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Chapter 29

The Jewish Tragedy

(Romans 10)

If there is any church or denomination that faces the great danger of repeating the sad history of Israel, it is ours, because we have so much in common with them we are vulnerable to follow the same mistakes that they have made. That is why I think it is important that as we look at the sad history of Israel in studying Romans 10 that we take heed to the words of the great man Santana when he said, “If we fail to know history, we are doomed to repeat it.”

I would like to begin by pointing out three main areas wherein the Jews failed. Then I would like to analyze how Paul brings out this problem in Romans 10. Then we will apply it to ourselves. The Jews failed in three main areas:

1. The main thing they failed in was to not

realize God's purpose in giving them three fathers. God gave Israel three fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Jews understood by that: anyone who is a natural child or a natural descendant of these three men constituted God's elect or God's Israel. But we saw in our last three studies that is not what God intended. God gave Israel three fathers that they may represent the spiritual children of His people. In other words, it is only those who have the faith of Abraham, are born from above like Isaac was, and whose faith endures unto the end like Jacob's did who constitute true Israel. But the Jews failed to see this.

2. This failure led them to even a greater tragedy and that is the gospel itself. They thought that when God said to Abraham, "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you" [Genesis 12:3] that He meant them, the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But God did not mean them.

What did God mean? Turn to Galatians 3 and there the apostle Paul tells us what God actually

meant when He gave Abraham the promise in Genesis 12:3. Galatians 3:16:

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ.

Because the Jews felt that salvation was by inheritance and by the works of the law which God gave the Jews through Moses, they failed to see that Christ was the fulfillment of the promise. Therefore, they rejected the gospel and they perverted the promise to salvation by works and by inheritance.

3. The third problem, which is also a very serious problem the Jews committed, was that, even though God tried several times to correct the problem, to rectify their mistakes, the Jews stubbornly rejected Him so that, at the end of His ministry Jesus had to say these words as recorded in Matthew 23. Jesus arrived at Jerusalem for the last time. He’s now at the very top of the hill. He

looks down to the great city and with tears in His eyes He makes this statement in Matt. 23:37,38:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate.

This is the tragedy of Israel, literal Israel. And their history has been recorded in Scripture that we may avoid this tragedy. That is why I want you to turn now to Romans 10 and we are going to look at this chapter. We are going to look at it in great detail because it has some very important lessons for us. Notice how Paul begins Romans 10:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.

The word "desire" actually means "good will" so he's saying, "My sincere good will for my people, my supplication, my prayer to God is that

my own people, literal Israel, may be saved.” Now he’s simply repeating his concern which he expressed in Romans 9:3, where he said:

For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race....

We may look at this statement and say, “Well, after all, Paul was a Jew and it was natural for him to have a burden for the Jews.” But when you look at the facts, this is quite amazing because his own people, the Jews, hated Paul. They looked at him as a traitor. They were the ones who actually nabbed him and grabbed him and handed him over to be killed. He was hated by the Jews. He was despised by them because they looked upon him as a traitor. You only have to read the book of Acts and you will find this is true. But in spite of this, Paul had a tremendous burden for his fellow Jews.

It is my prayer that we may have a similar burden for our fellow Adventists. I was going to say “fellow Americans,” but do you know

something? In the North American Division, we have more Seventh-day Adventists who no longer attend church than those who do. And unless you and I have the burden that Paul had, these folks will remain out and, eventually, Satan will pull them out of Christ. It is my prayer that we may have the same desire, the same good will, the same supplication and the same concern that our people may be saved.

Then in Romans 10:2-3 he pinpoints, he nails down the problem:

For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

They did not lack zeal but they did lack knowledge and I want to spend some time on that. I'll tell you why. Today there are many Seventh-day Adventists who have a tremendous zeal for

God but without knowledge. This is one of the reasons why there are so many offshoot movements cropping up all around us. These people are not bad people. They are sincere. They really want to do the will of God. They see the church failing, they see all kinds of weaknesses. They see standards coming down in the church and, out of zeal for God, they are trying to do their best, but the question is, “Is it according to knowledge?”

Let’s remember, Paul knew what he was talking about because he was a victim to this problem himself. Turn to Philippians 3, where Paul describes his own situation as a Pharisee before his conversion. First look at verse three because that’s the statement that we need to remind ourselves constantly in terms of what it means to be a Christian. Philippians 3:3:

For it is we [Christians] who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh [their own nature]....

And then in verses four to six he tells the Philippians, “Look, if anyone can boast about what they are and what they have accomplished, I can do more than you.”

Then he gives a list of things that he was and what he had accomplished as a Pharisee before his conversion. Look at the first part of verse six:

...As for zeal [for God], persecuting the church....

When Paul instigated the stoning of Stephen, when Paul was going on his way to Damascus to take captive the Christians, do you realize that, in his heart, he thought he was serving God? He had a zeal for God but was it according to knowledge? The answer is no. When God confronted him on the Damascus road and said, “Paul you are not persecuting my enemies; you are persecuting Me when you touch my people,” it came as a shock to Paul. But I’ll tell you, Paul was one Jew who was willing to repent, and I thank God for it.

Otherwise, we would have had half the New Testament missing in the Bible.

The Jews had a zeal for God but zeal without knowledge can be dangerous. It can be futile. That's exactly what happened. A zeal for God will not save them, otherwise Romans 10:1-2 is meaningless. "I want my fellow Jews to be saved. They have zeal for God but, unfortunately, it is not according to knowledge."

Then, in verse three, he pinpoints where they failed in their knowledge:

Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

You will notice the word "righteousness" appears twice in verse three. Here Paul is pinpointing two systems of salvation. We can say, "the right way or the wrong way," but I prefer to say, "God's method of salvation and man's method of salvation." Let us be absolutely clear that the

two cannot be mixed together. They cannot be married together. It is one or the other.

For example, take Paul's own incident. We read Philippians 3:3, but if you read verses 7-9, Paul tells us in this letter that when he discovered Christ he realized that his own righteousness not only could not save him but was like filthy rags. It was dung. It was refuse. He was willing to give all of it up that he may win Christ and be found in Him, having His righteousness which is through faith and not through the works of the law. Philippians 3:7-9:

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

So he is saying here that the Jews did not accept God's way of salvation, and this is because they failed to see the purpose of the three fathers. The outcome was that they failed to understand what these three fathers meant and the next thing they failed to understand was why God gave them the law. We can make the same mistake because God has restored the law in our church. But have we understood the significance and purpose of that law? Or are we making the same mistake as the Jews?

They failed to accept God's righteousness because they had established their own righteousness and, therefore, they refused to give it up in exchange for the righteousness of Christ. Now I am emphasizing this because God is saying the same thing to us through the message of the Laodicean Church: "You have to buy from Me white raiment." Revelation 3:17-18:

You say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realize that

you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Do you know what the word “buy” means in the Middle East? To this day, in many of the remote areas, you do not buy with money but you exchange. Buying means giving up what you have for what you want. If you want to buy a pair of shoes and you look at the tag and it says \$50 and you have \$50 but you can’t keep that \$50 and have the shoes. Otherwise, you are a thief. And like giving up the \$50 in exchange for the shoes, you have to give up your righteousness in exchange for Christ’s righteousness.

Galatians 5:4 makes this absolutely clear:

You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

I want to emphasize that Paul is discussing here the method of salvation. He is not discussing here the law as a standard of Christian living. We will come to that when we come to Romans 13 where Paul will say that the true Christian does fulfill the law because in him there is love and love is the fulfillment of the law. But he is discussing here the law as a method or system of salvation. And he is saying in Galatians 5:4 that, if you accept Christ, the law method is out. If you accept the law method, then you are fallen from grace and Christ has become of no effect.

Going back to Romans 10:3, I want to look at the word “ignorant” or “they did not know”:

Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.

In English, the word “ignorant” means “not to be aware of.” But that’s not what Paul meant. Did the Jews not know the gospel? When we come to the end of chapter 10 you will discover that they

knew the gospel. Their ignorance was deliberate and persistent. It was not that they did not know. They knew, but they deliberately refused to acknowledge, to submit to the righteousness of God which saves us. In Romans 10:4, Paul makes a very difficult statement:

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Why is this verse difficult? Because of the word “end.” The Greek word *telos* has two meanings. It can mean fulfillment or it can mean termination. Which did Paul mean? Did he mean that Christ fulfilled the law for righteousness to those who believe, or did he mean that he terminated the law for righteousness?

Bible scholars have wrestled with it and you have one thing in this camp and another in another camp and there are some very reliable scholars who take both camps. And that’s the camp to which I belong. But I need to explain it because, if I stop there, you will go and tell the brethren that

Pastor Sequeira teaches that Christ did away with the law. I am not teaching that, but I do believe that Paul had in mind “termination” because I feel that, as I read Paul, he often would use words that have more than one meaning because he tried to squeeze an awful lot of thought in a short statement.

Let us look at both meanings. First the word “fulfillment.” Christ is not like human beings. He is righteous. God is righteous. He’s perfect and, therefore, God cannot save us bypassing the law. When the policeman stops me for speeding (which he hasn’t yet), but when he catches me and forgives me he is doing a wonderful thing but he is not doing a righteous thing. Because he is not paid to forgive me. He is paid to uphold the law. And the law says that if you break the speed limit you should receive a citation.

God cannot do that. He cannot say, “I love you human beings and since I’m sovereign, I’ll forgive you.” He can’t do that. He’s not only a God of love but He is a righteous, He’s a holy, He’s a just

God. So, in order to save us, Christ first of all had to qualify to be our Savior.

How did He qualify? He joined Himself to us. He became one with us and that took place at the incarnation. Having done that, qualifying now to be the second Adam, He had to do two things to save us in order to satisfy the law. We covered this when we studied Romans 3:31. He obeyed the law perfectly because the law of God says, “If you obey me perfectly, you can live. Otherwise you cannot live.” In Christ, we have perfect obedience to the law, but that obedience could not cancel our disobedience.

Christ did not come to save the righteous. He came to save sinners. He did not link Himself to sinless men. He linked Himself to fallen mankind that He may redeem us. Then he took that humanity to the cross and He surrendered it and, at infinite cost to Him, because He'd joined Himself to us, He surrendered that cross to the full wages of sin: God abandonment. By His doing and dying He fulfilled the law perfectly so that He became

our righteousness. He fulfilled the law that everyone who believed Christ is the end of the law, the fulfillment of the law for righteousness to all who believe. That, folks, is good news.

But what did he mean when he said, “Christ is the end of the law”? First of all, I need to point out a problem. It is in your Bible but not in the original. You will notice in verse four the word “law” is preceded by the definite article and also in verse five. It does not exist in the original. So what did Paul mean by law? The word legalism in English has no similar word in the Greek language. They had no word in Greek called “legalism” in Paul’s day, so Paul would often use the word “law” to mean “legalism.”

Legalism is when we try to save ourselves by our own works. Christ brought that to an end. Why? Because, as I read Romans 5:18:

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that

brings life for all men.

If all men were reconciled to God, were justified by the doing and dying of Christ, then legalism was terminated. So Christ, on the one hand, fulfilled the law for righteousness for us and He terminated the works of the law, which is legalism as a means of salvation. The reason I know that this is what he has in mind is because the context is dealing not with the law as a standard of Christian living but as a method of salvation which, in English, we call legalism.

Now we go to verse five of Romans ten and there is a problem here.

Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: “The man who does these things will live by them.”

Again, the word “law” does not have the definite article. “The man who does these things will live by them.” Now what’s the problem with this text? Well, it is not a problem, really, but it is

a problem if you misuse this text. So I want to remind you. I have covered it many times and I want to repeat it again: please don't read a text out of context. I've had more than one person come to me with Romans 10:5 and read the last part of verse five and say "Look, even Paul teaches that we must keep the law in order to live." Paul said nothing of the sort.

What Paul is doing here is contrasting righteousness by faith with righteousness by law keeping. That's what he is doing here. And he says, "This is the difference: if you want to be saved by the law, you can't be saved by the law through faith but by performance." In other words, you can't go to the law and say, "Law, I have heard you. I believe in all the Ten Commandments." The law will not say back to you, "Since you believe in all the Ten Commandments, you may go to heaven." The law will not do that because that's not the platform upon which the law works. The law says, "If you believe in me, that means nothing to me. My rule is: If you obey me, if you do what I tell you, then you can live." So you cannot have

righteousness by faith through the law because the law demands performance. He is quoting here, of course, from Leviticus 18:5:

Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the Lord.

“If you Jews want to be saved through the law, two things are required:

1. You must obey the law.
2. You must obey it perfectly 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for the rest of your life.

If you fall on one point, I will condemn you.”
Gal.3:10:

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

That is how you are saved through the law.

But verse six contrasts the righteousness of faith in this way. There are two methods here he is discussing. He is not preaching salvation by works of the law. He is simply saying in verse five, “If you want to be saved by the law, you must do what the law requires.” But if you want to be saved by faith, this is the way [Romans 10:6-8]:

But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead.) But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,” that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming....

Now Paul is using typical Middle Eastern logic. This is not Western logic, so let me explain to you in very simple terms what Paul is saying here. There are two ways to be saved. This is man’s way. According to man’s way, God is up there or God is down there, He is somewhere, and, if you

want to be saved, you have to come up to His level. In other words, God is not saying, “I feel sorry for you. I’ll try to help you.” No.

This is the foundation of every pagan religion. Man must do what God wants him to do. Then he will say, “Heaven is yours.” For example, what’s the difference between the cross of Christ and pagan sacrifices? Some of them were human sacrifices. What was the difference? When pagans offered sacrifices, they were doing it to appease an angry god. When Christ died on the cross, He was not dying to appease an angry god. God was already in Him, reconciling the world to Himself. The eros religion is man trying to reach up to God, people trying to seek God that they might be saved. Remember what I said? Roman Catholics go to Rome that they may find God. The Muslims go to Mecca that they may find God. and Adventists go to camp meetings that they may find God.

But Paul says, “You don’t have to go to find God, He comes to you through the message of the gospel.” This is the way, says Paul in verse eight,

“The word is near you.” In other words, God, first of all, did not ask you to come up. I want to remind you of Romans 5:6-10:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

“For while we were helpless, while we were ungodly, while we were sinners, while we were enemies, God redeemed, reconciled. Christ died for us while we were sinners.”

God doesn’t say, “You do your best and I will make up the difference.” No. God said to His Son,

“Go down there while they are still helpless, while they are incapable of saving themselves, and redeem them.” John 3:17:

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

On the cross, Jesus said, “It is finished.” When He prayed in John 17:4, He said:

I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

But Christ did not only save us. That was wonderful, but now, having gone to heaven, He doesn't believe in retirement. He is working up there, interceding for us. But He did something else. He sent the Holy Spirit down here. “Please, Holy Spirit, convict these people about my good news. Convict them that without Me they cannot be saved.”

And so it is all of God and all I can do is to say,

“Thank you, God for your salvation.” That is righteousness by faith. And out of a grateful heart I will say, “For me now to live is Christ.” This is the difference.

And then he expounds on this in Romans 10:9-10:

...If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Jesus being raised from the dead is the greatest evidence that God gave that sin was conquered. If it wasn't, Christ would have remained in the grave.

...You will be saved.

Not you may be saved but you will be saved.
Romans 10:10:

For it is within your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

This confession is not what some Pentecostals do, raising the hands and saying, “Praise the Lord, I am saved.” The confession is going and telling others about what you have received through Jesus Christ. The confession is witnessing Christ. But it is not enough to believe in Jesus. It has to come from the heart. It is not enough to say, “I believe in Jesus. I confess him.” There has to be a heart response, for I read in Romans 10:11:

As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

I have heard something that is horrifying to me. I have been given to understand that some folks believe that, when we go to heaven, all our sins will be displayed during the thousand years for us to criticize each other. I want to give you two texts. Please let the Bible speak to you. James 5:19,20:

My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back,

remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

If there is a person who has left Christ who has gone out of the way and you, as a believer, go and find him and bring him back to the church, you have done two wonderful things:

1. You have saved a soul through witnessing.
2. You have covered a multitude of sins.

The second text I want to give you is a statement that is addressed to us: Revelation 3:18. There are three things Christ is offering to the Laodicean Church. I want you to look at the second one.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

The white clothes is the righteousness of Christ. Why should we buy from Him? Why should we exchange our righteousness for His righteousness? Why? Please look at the text:

...Buy from me white clothes to wear, so you can cover [with His righteousness, not ours] your shameful nakedness....

Yes, your sins and mine will come up in the investigative judgment, which is taking place now, but you will not be there. The only ones who will see it are the angels and, by the way, they already know all of your sins. So that is nothing new to them. But thank God He will never display our sins before the universe or before the believers. Why? Because in Christ our sins will be blotted out completely.

Here is another text. In Romans 9:30-32 it explains that the Jews rejected righteousness by faith but the Gentiles accepted it:

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the “stumbling stone.”

So they were saved while the Jews were lost. Look at the last part of Romans 9:33, talking to the Jews who had allowed Christ to be a stumbling block:

...And the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.

I thank God that my sins will not be displayed, because you may think I'm a good fellow. All you know is the outward Sequeira but you don't know me inside. I tell you, I'm rotten inside just like you are. We all wear the same cap.

Look at Romans 10:12 onward:

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile...

In Galatians he adds even more, like there is no difference between male and female or between a slave and free person. We will come to that in chapter twelve, too.

...The same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

It doesn't matter who you are. God has the greatest desire that everyone will be saved. But He will not force that salvation upon you, because He has given you a free will. But He wants to save you.

Then he goes through a list of questions [Romans 10:14-15]. The answers are obvious:

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?

You can't call on somebody's name and not believe in it.

And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

May I remind you that today we have in the western world the idea that a preacher is somebody who is employed by the denomination to preach the gospel. That is not the New Testament teaching. The work of preaching is the work of every member. Read Acts 8 and see what the early Christians did. The members scattered and went about preaching Christ. I'll tell you, we need that desperately in this country.

We think about the mission field. I spent 18 years in Africa. Our young people there are on fire for Christ. It is here that I have the problem. We don't have that incentive.

When I was chaplain in Nairobi University and the university was closed down because of a strike, these kids went out on their own, without incentive, without a budget, without promotional programs from the brethren. They went out and baptized a hundred souls in three months because they were on fire for Christ. That's true. Economically, they have no future. I'll tell you, their economic loss is a blessing in disguise.

I pray for the day when this country collapses economically; then maybe our people will be turned on. It's a tragedy that we have to face crises to bring life into the church. But I pray that we will see what these folks are doing. Can we have frontier missions in America for our own people? We need that, too. I pray for this country. It gave me status privileges but I want Americans to be turned on for Christ.

Where did the Jews go wrong? Look at Romans 10:16:

But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

But here comes the question. Are the Jews lost because they have not heard the gospel? Are the Jews actually ignorant about the good news of salvation? The answer is “no.” Romans 10:18:

But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”

Of course, to Paul that meant the Roman Empire where the Jews were scattered. Romans 10:19:

Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.”

Yes, the gospel has gone to all the world but what has happened? The Gentiles said, “Thank you, God!” But the Jews said, “We don’t want Him.” Romans 10:20-21:

And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me” [the Gentiles]. But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”

Please don’t tell me we are not like the Jews. “What greater deception can come to those who think they are all right when they are all wrong.” I’m quoting Ellen G. White about our church. If we were not obstinate, the work would have been finished long ago. As my professor Heppenstall said, “If the Adventist Church had done its job, we would not have had the last two world wars. Therefore, we must take the blame to a large degree.”

Go to 1 Corinthians 10:11-12. It is my prayer

that we will take heed to this counsel (he was speaking about the Jews and their history):

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Chapter 30

God Keeps His Promise

(Romans 11)

We have come to the final study in the section of Romans that deals with the situation of the Jews. Chapter nine began with Paul's heartfelt concern for his own people, the Jews. Here the apostle tells us that God has not failed to keep His promise to Israel, which is salvation, but the problem was that the Jews had failed to realize what God meant by "Israel."

It is not the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that constitute Israel, says God. It is those who are spiritual descendants. We covered this in detail. You need the faith of Abraham; you have to have the new birth experience, born from above, as was Isaac; and you have to have the perseverance of your faith like Jacob, before you qualify to be true Israelites.

Then, in chapter 10, Paul goes on to explain in detail that, if the Jews are lost, it is entirely their fault. Why? Because, number one God kept His promise. He promised salvation and fulfilled it in Christ. They are lost because they have deliberately, persistently, and ultimately said, “No, we don’t want your gift. We don’t want your salvation,” through unbelief. So they must take the blame.

Now there is chapter 11. Paul concludes his discussion regarding the Jews by pointing to two important facts, facts that have a lesson for us which we need to keep in mind in terms of our mission:

1. Fact number one is that literal Israel’s rejection is not total. That’s in verses one to ten of chapter 11.
2. The second thing that Paul points out is that Israel’s rejection is not final. It is not total and it is not final.

With this in mind, let us look at chapter 11. Christ declared to the Jews just before His crucifixion [Matthew 23:38]:

Look, your house is left to you desolate.

He did not mean that, when probation closed for the Jews as a nation, that no Jew could be saved after that. He did not mean that. Simply what He meant was that, from now onwards, the Jews will no longer be the ones who will represent Him. He had taken the torch from them and given it to the Christian Church, which was primarily Gentiles. In other words, what Paul is saying in this first part of Romans 11 is that the rejection of the Jews is not total. There will be many Jews like there were in the past until the end of time who will accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. And the best example he can give is himself. Paul was converted after the stoning of Stephen, after the rejection of the Jewish nation. So in verse one of chapter 11 he says:

I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of

Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin.

So there's still hope for the Jews, he says. Then in Romans 11:2a:

God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew.

I need to pause here because you see there is much confusion today even within our own ranks between foreknowledge and foreordination. The word that Paul used comes from the two Greek words pro and ginosco. Pro means "before" and ginosco means "to know." Therefore, what Paul is saying is that God did not cast away those He knew beforehand who would accept His Son Jesus Christ as their Savior. He has never rejected any Jew who said, "Thank you God for your gift, Jesus Christ." And then he gives an illustration in the rest of Romans 11:2:

Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah — how he appealed to God against Israel....

Here is Elijah talking to God about Israel. Do you know what Elijah said to God? Look at verse three; Paul is quoting from 1 Kings 19:10,14. He says:

“Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me”

Who is the “they” that Elijah is talking about? He is talking about the Jewish nation. He is talking about Israel, God’s covenant people. He is saying to God, “God, do you know that all your people have forsaken you? They have become Babylon and I’m the only faithful one.” Was he right? He was a prophet, but was he right? No. Why not? He was judging by outward appearance. May this be a lesson to us. Let us never judge people by their outward appearance.

I have learned this in Africa when the communists took over, when we had the Marxist revolution in Ethiopia. The ones we thought would

give in were the ones who were loyal. The ones we thought would be upholding the truth were the ones who gave in. So never judge people. Elijah made that mistake. He judged His people. But what does verse four, the divine response say to you?

And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

"Elijah, you do not realize," He says, "I have reserved for myself not two or three or a handful but seven thousand men." Please notice that, in those days, "men" was referring to not individuals only but to their families. Seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Who is Baal? You may say today, "I have never bowed my knee to Baal." The word "Baal" simply means "Lord." That's all it meant. Then what's the implication here? The word "Baal" is when you make yourself lord and replace yourself or your mind or your works, anything that is true of you, you replace God's salvation in Jesus Christ with

that. For example, Marxism is Baal worship today. Humanism is Baal worship today. Liberal theology is Baal worship today because in liberal theology you make your mind the measuring stick of truth. Wherever there is self, there you have Baal worship.

But God is saying to Elijah, there are seven thousand. Now how does Paul define those faithful seven thousand? See verse five:

So too [just like the faithful believers in the days of Elijah], at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.

There are two important things that I want you to notice here in verse five. We need to get clear the definition of the word “remnant” in the New Testament. Sometimes we give it a wrong picture. We say that we are the remnant. What does the Bible mean by the word “remnant”?

The word “remnant” used in this context and also in the book of Revelation refers to those who

are faithful to God and to His truth in the midst of apostasy. Israel as a nation had apostatized in the day of Elijah but there were seven thousand Jews who did not yield to Baal worship. They were still faithful in the sense that they believed that their salvation was not in themselves but in the promise of God in Jesus Christ. They are called the remnant and they are also called “the election of grace.”

The word “elect” means to be chosen. How many did God elect to be saved in Christ? All people. Not only all Jews but all people. But God will not force that choice upon you. God is not a Marxist. When I was in Ethiopia, one of the Russian Marxists said to me, “You Adventists have tried desperately to help these people to give up smoking through your five-day program.” He was familiar with our program because he was in the medical line. “But,” he said, “we have a better way of solving the problem.”

I said, “Really? Will you tell me your way?”

“It is simple,” he said. “We pass an order, a law that there should be no more smoking in the country of Ethiopia.”

I asked, “What happens if a person doesn’t want to do that, he wants to smoke?”

He said, “You don’t understand. When we say there is no smoking, there is no smoking, period. Otherwise he swallows lead” [is shot].

God doesn’t do that. He doesn’t say, “I have chosen all of you to stop smoking and because I’m sovereign, and I have chosen you, you will be saved.” That is Calvinism. That is not Biblical. God doesn’t say that because He has elected you and because He is sovereign, you will be saved. He has chosen all people to be saved but if you refuse the choice, His choice for you, which is the only way you could be saved, He will give you what you have chosen, which is death. Because if you reject Christ, you have chosen death. How do I know this? Look at verses six:

And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Please notice God has elected all people to be saved by grace. That's what the Jews rejected. They rejected grace in place of works.

May I remind you that Paul is not discussing here the fruits of salvation, which involves lots of works. He is not talking about works or faith. He's talking about works as a means, a method of salvation. When we study chapters 12, 13, 14, and 15, Paul will discuss the fruits of salvation which produces a lot of works. But they are the evidence, never the means. Here the Jews did not choose works as simply the evidence of being children of God but as a means of salvation, which is Baal worship. All pagan religions are based on salvation by works. Verse seven:

What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened,....

What was Israel seeking? They were seeking salvation. Why did they not obtain it? May I remind you of chapter nine, verses 30-33. They sought by the wrong method, by works of the law, and they failed. The Gentiles sought it by faith and they succeeded. So Paul is saying here: “What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks but the elect, those who have accepted salvation by grace, have obtained it. ”

The rest of the Jews have been hardened. Then he quotes from different passages of the Old Testament that God was not taken by surprise. But I want you to notice the first part of verse eight:

As it is written: “God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day.”

Now this is one of the statements that are difficult. There are several statements made in the Bible that are difficult. If you take that statement at face value, it gives you the impression that God is the one who gave them a spirit of stupor. He

was the One who closed their eyes and their ears. It sounds that way. There are other texts, “God hardened Pharaoh’s heart.” And there is even a text in the Old Testament where God said, “I created evil.” Of course, we Western people read that text and say, “See, God is to blame.” We need to understand this in the Middle Eastern concept. There are two things we must keep in mind. Number one, God is sovereign. Do you know what that means? It means that nothing happens without God’s permission.

If I am at the edge of a cliff, let’s say the Great Escarpment, the Rift Valley of Kenya. There’s a big drop, thousands of feet. The Rift Valley begins in Israel and goes right through Africa. And there is a family who’s visiting that area, too, and they have a little two-year-old baby. While they are watching the animals with their binoculars, the baby begins to crawl towards the edge of the cliff. The parents don’t see this happening, but I see it. Now I know very well that if they allow the baby to keep on, it will go over the edge of the cliff and drop to its death. I simply watch, knowing very

well what is going to happen and I could do something about it but I did not do anything about it. Who is to blame if that baby falls over the cliff and dies? I must take some of the blame because I saw it happening. I did not warn the parents. I did nothing about it. I just waited and watched it happen.

Now there are many terrible things that have taken place in this world. The holocaust, for example. Couldn't God stop it? Satan tempting Adam. Couldn't God stop Satan from coming to this world and tempting our first parents? Yes. He could have stopped all those things. He didn't do it. And so He assumes the blame because He's sovereign. He only assumes the blame but, in the judgment, every knee will confess because it's only in the judgment that God will reveal to the universe why He held back. And so the Bible says in the judgment every knee will bow down, including Satan, and will confess that God is right.

So God is not the One who put the spirit of stupor into the eyes, minds, and hearts of the Jews.

He's saying that because He allowed it. Why? because God never forces anyone to accept His salvation. Then Paul quotes David saying the same thing. In other words, the Jews were all — without exception — elected to be saved. But the reason why many are lost is because they hardened their hearts. So God had to say to them, "I leave your house desolate." But is this rejection final? No. Verse 11 onward says, "No, it is not final." Romans 11:11:

Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.

You know, I'm amazed at my God. Do you know what Paul is saying here in verses 11 to 14? Here God had chosen all the Jews to be saved but many of them have rejected it. What does He do? He takes their failure and He turns it into good. How? Two ways:

1. Since the Jews have rejected the gospel, it is

a wonderful opportunity to take it to the Gentiles. So He used this as a means of turning the disciples' ministry which was limited only to the Jews. He says, "Now, take it to the Gentiles."

2. By taking it to the Gentiles He is hoping that the Jews will get jealous. They missed something and will say, "We better go and accept it." I'm amazed how God will try any method to save us. He saves us only in Christ but He will try any method to get us to accept His salvation.

I'm going to be honest with you. Both my wife and I joined this church out of fear. I was scared of the judgment which I was told began in 1844, which I believe is correct. But I was scared because I was a Roman Catholic who was keeping Sunday and I would be judged by the commandments. Here I was breaking one, which meant breaking all. The Bible says so in James 2:12 and so, out of fear, I joined God's commandment-keeping people. I'm still looking

for them but I joined people who claimed to be keeping the commandments. But I still see fighting and jealousy in my church so I am still waiting for God to produce a people who will love each other in spite of what they are. That's keeping the commandments.

But I thank God that I have discovered it. I discovered this five years after I was ordained a minister. Terrible! That we are sinners saved by grace entirely and that works are the fruits. Anyone who says the gospel makes you lazy is a liar. If I were to have a time sheet, some of you would be surprised. I don't believe in resting. Ask my wife. Our vacation this year was in meetings all over the country. Not because I'm good, but I cannot keep quiet. I want the world to know that there is a hope for everyone of us.

So God has taken this occasion and given the Gentiles a chance. In verse 14, God is saying, "I want even to use jealousy if it will save some Jews." Romans 11:13-14:

I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people [i.e., the Jews] to envy and save some of them.

In the judgment, God will say like Jesus said to the Jews, “I did everything. I even used jealousy to get you to accept my gift, and you would not. So you have forced me to leave you desolate.” Then, in verses 15 to 24, he brings out an illustration. It is an olive tree. Romans 11:15-24:

For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches. If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then,

“Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree.

All I will do here is to explain the significance of it. It's a symbol. He's using the olive tree as a symbol to explain a truth.

1. The roots and the sap, which some translations call the fatness, is Christ, because Christ is the source of life. He is the source of my

hope, my peace, my righteousness, you name it. My ticket to heaven.

2. The natural branches are the Jews because salvation comes through the Jews. Jesus Himself took the human race as a Jew. But those branches which represent the Jews are in two camps: believers, which are the remnant, and the unbelievers, which are the unfaithful. What does He do with the unfaithful, because the believers had no problem. They are part of Israel. The tree is Israel. He takes branches representing the unfaithful and breaks them off. And what does He do? He grafts the wild olive branches, which represent us Gentiles. So we are joined together to Israel and we enjoy the fatness and the roots which is Jesus Christ. Why did God break off the branches? In verse 18 He says to the Gentiles:

...Do not boast over those branches [have been broken off]. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. [It is Christ who is your Savior, not you who saves yourself or Israel.] You will say then, “Branches

were broken off so that I could be grafted in.”

Did God say, “Well, I don’t have room for everybody, and if I take all the Jews to heaven there will not be room for the Gentiles, so let me get rid of some of the Jews so that I may take some of the Gentiles”? No, that’s not the reason, Paul says. Why? Because there is room in heaven for everybody, Jew and Gentile. Then why did He break off the branches? Look at Romans 11:20:

...But they were broken off because of unbelief....

Unbelief is the willful, deliberate rejection of the gospel. Unbelief is the only sin that God will not pardon. Every sin against the law is forgivable, but the sin against grace God cannot forgive because His love will not use compulsion. He will not force people into heaven who have said, “No, I don’t want it.”

So Paul says, “Because of unbelief they were broken off and you Gentiles stand by faith. Do not

be haughty or proud but remember, what happened to the unfaithful Jews can happen to you.”

It's a lesson for us, folks. Please don't say that because you're an Adventist that you are beyond making the mistakes of the Jews. We can repeat the same mistake and God forbid that we should become proud and self-righteous and look upon ourselves as if we were the only true Christians and the others are not. Be careful lest we find ourselves in the same shoes as the Jews. Verses 21-22a say:

For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God....

God is merciful, but He's also just. Consider that. If you continue in His goodness, there's no problem. If you are faithful unto the end to the truth in Christ, there is no problem because, as a child of Jacob, you belong to Israel. Verse 23:

And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will

be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

If the Jews today would turn back and say, “God, we made a mistake; we did crucify the Messiah,” what will God do? Would He say, “It’s too late!”? No, folks, He will take the Jews and graft them back into the olive tree. That is why we have a mission to the Jews, also. Have you ever been to our church in Jerusalem? It’s the worst church I’ve ever been to. When I was there in 1975 there were 13 members. The youngest was 65. Terrible!

It’s true that it’s hard to win souls in Israel but I’ll tell you, the Pentecostals are having tremendous success. How? Because they are infiltrating the Jewish community. You can’t win the Jews by simply holding evangelistic meetings. You have to infiltrate them. You have to love them. You have to admit that you are as much a sinner as they are and that we are both saved by grace. That’s how Paul concludes in verse 24:

After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree

that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree.

God is still concerned about the Jews today. Now we come to verse 25, the conclusion:

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

I wrestled with that one. I'm going to give you some texts and I hope that you will wrestle with it, too. What Paul is saying here is the Jews as a nation have rejected the Messiah. That was way back in 31 A.D. and 34 A.D. when Stephen was stoned. That was the final stroke. What did God do? He took the gospel and He gave it to the Gentiles. How long is He going to give it to the Gentiles? Until every Gentile gets a chance to accept or reject the gospel. How long will that be?

Turn to Luke 21. In this chapter, like Matthew 24, you have Christ giving the prophecies of the last days, our time. He makes a very interesting statement that I hope will give you some food for thought. It begins in Luke 21:20-24. This is in the context of Christ saying to the Jews, “I leave your house desolate.” Here Jesus is explaining to His disciples the reality of that. Luke 21:20:

When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.

In other words, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by the Roman army, you know that the reality of that desolation will become history. Luke 21:21:

Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.

Luke 21:22:

For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment

of all that has been written.

What does it mean? God has removed His protection. Chapter one of Romans, God withdraws because they have rejected Him. Now look at Luke 21:23:

How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people.

I wish I had time to explain what this is all about in history but it was terrible. The Jews were actually eating rats. They were actually eating their own babies that had died in order to keep alive in Jerusalem. That's how bad it was. And verse 24 adds to that:

They will fall by the sword [the Roman sword] and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on [occupied] by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The Romans took Jerusalem in 70 A.D. They drove the Jews out. They were followed by the Saracens, Ottomans, then the British, Palestinians, all Gentiles, until 1968 when the Jews came back to Jerusalem. Now they didn't occupy all of Jerusalem. Forty-five percent of the inhabitants of Jerusalem are still Palestinians. Does that not tell us that we are approaching the fullness of the time of the Gentiles?

But in terms of Paul's writing, we must be honest with Paul. The Jews returning back to Jerusalem is not the main issue. The main issue is that God will not close probation for the Gentile world until this gospel has been preached to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. What we are seeing in Israel is only warning us that the end is about to come. The reason why the Palestinians in Jerusalem have not been driven out is because we as a people have not done our job. We have not yet preached the gospel to the whole world. In fact, we have not even preached the gospel completely to our own people. Most Adventists are still in legalism or some subtle form of it, like

Galatianism. They are insecure about their salvation.

But, my dear people, when God has given the Gentile world every opportunity to hear the gospel, do you know what He's going to do? He's going to step back and say to the Jews, "I want to give you one more chance." And He will give the Jews another chance. Not those who are dead but those who are living at the end of time. He will say to the Jews, "Please, you have turned your backs on Me for so long, won't you accept Me?" When I read the concluding verses of Romans 11, this is what comes across. Verse 25b says:

Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

Hardness has happened to the Jews not permanently, not finally, but until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Come into what? Come into Israel by faith. And so all Israel will be saved. Romans 11:26-27:

And so all Israel [that means all the believing Jews from Abraham right up to the end of time] will be saved, as it is written: [then he quotes the Old Testament] “The Deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness [which has taken place in the last 2,000 years] away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.”

Then in verses 28-31 he says:

As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable. Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you.

“Look, concerning the gospel, they are enemies. They rejected the gospel. They became enemies of the gospel but, because of this, you got

the gospel, Gentiles, for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. God promised the fathers — Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — that all of those who qualify to be Israel will be saved. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.”

God never changes His mind about your salvation. It is you who can change your mind. He will never change. He will never say, “I don’t want to save you.” He will say at the end of time, “How often I tried to show you. How often I pleaded with you to accept My Son, but you would not, so you have to get what you have chosen, not what I have chosen for you.” Verses 30-31:

Just as you who were at one time disobedient to God have now received mercy as a result of their disobedience, so they too have now become disobedient in order that they too may now receive mercy as a result of God’s mercy to you.

Both Jews and Gentiles are sinners. None of us deserve salvation. We are all in the same camp.

There is no difference, says Paul, in Romans 3:23:

...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:9:

...Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.

We have no right for salvation. We all are disobedient. Romans 11:32:

For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

The Jews and the Gentiles are saved by grace alone. Then he has this song of praise in verses 33 to 36:

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who

has been his counselor?” “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

Chapter 31

Born Crucified

(Romans 12:1-3)

Romans 12:1-3 is the introduction to Paul's final discussion of the gospel in Romans. In fact, it is the final unit. It begins with chapter twelve and goes right up to chapter sixteen. This section deals with Christian ethics or Christian living. In order for us to really understand this section, to appreciate it and even to experience it, it is important that we study this section in the context of the whole theme of Romans. Otherwise, we will go wrong.

Christian ethics to Paul is the practical application, the outworking of righteousness by faith. It is the fruits of the gospel. That is why, as we begin this section, I would like, first of all, to make a summary of the whole theme of Romans so that we really understand where we are coming from and where we are going.

The central theme of Romans is expressed in Romans 1:17, in the introduction, where Paul says:

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

Now this theme is taken out from an Old Testament statement from Habakkuk 2:4. In order to understand what the theme of Romans is, it would be wise for us to look at Habakkuk 2:4 since Paul does not quote the whole text because he assumes that the people to whom he is writing were familiar with it. In Paul’s day, there was no New Testament. All they had was the Old Testament. So I would like you to turn to Habakkuk 2:4:

See, he is puffed up; his desires are not upright — but the righteous will live by his faith...

The reason why I think Paul uses this as his theme, there may be more than one reason, but one

reason why he uses it for his theme of Romans is because the Jews had misinterpreted this text. The word “faith” in Habakkuk 2:4 could be translated from the Hebrew text as “faithful” and, because of this, the Jews interpreted Habakkuk 2:4 like this. They said, “He who is just by his or her faithfulness [in other words, “man’s” faithfulness] lives.”

They had twisted Habakkuk 2:4. They had turned it from righteousness by faith to righteousness by works. And, of course, Paul was aware of this. Unfortunately, too many Adventists have fallen into the same trap. So Paul gives the correct meaning of this text in the whole of Romans. It is not our faithfulness that saves us. It is God’s faithfulness that saves us. And I’m glad that it is that way, because none of us have been really faithful, but God is always faithful. He keeps His promise. The only reason why people are lost is because they deliberately, willfully reject that promise. But God is faithful and that’s what Romans is all about.

Now how does Paul explain this theme? In the first few chapters, the first section of Romans, chapter 1:18 to 3:20, Paul proves from every conceivable angle that man is spiritually bankrupt, therefore, he cannot save himself by his faithfulness. Why? Because all are under sin. There are none good. There are none that can do righteousness. Man stands guilty before God. So anyone whose heart is lifted up and thinks he's faithful and that he can save himself by his faithfulness has misunderstood Habakkuk 2:4.

Then, after doing that, after spending considerable time in this, Paul turns to the gospel itself: righteousness or justification is through God's gift, Jesus Christ. Paul introduces the gospel in Romans 3:21 as "the righteousness of God" obtained for us in the holy history of our Lord Jesus Christ, His doing and His dying. This is in chapter three, verse 21, right up to the end of chapter seven, verse 25. But this whole section, which is the heart of the book of Romans, which he explains from every angle, can be summed up by Romans 3:28:

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

A person is justified by faith in God's provision, apart from his or her own faithfulness or performance.

Then, in chapter eight, Paul deals with the way this righteousness becomes ours through faith and is experienced in the life of the believer. He says that this righteousness is ours by faith and is reflected in us and experienced in us through the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells in every believer. This is the foundation of chapters 12 through 16. In fact, we could go from chapter eight right up to chapter 12 and not miss the logic of Paul's argument.

But, in chapters nine, 10, and 11, he turns his attention to the Jews. Why? Because it was the Jews who misinterpreted Habakkuk 2:4. In these three chapters, which we studied in detail, Paul goes to show that the Jews had missed the point.

They were trying to attain righteousness by works of the law when all the time what God was trying to get across in Habakkuk 2:4 was righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ.

Finally, in chapters 12 to 16, Paul concludes with this important truth of how the glorious message of righteousness by faith is to affect us in our daily Christian living. In other words, we could divide Habakkuk 2:4 into three sections and we could divide Romans into three sections. Section number one is: “Behold the one who is proud, the one who is self-righteous, his soul is not upright, he is not honest with himself.”

Paul expounds it in a general way in Romans 1:18 to 3:20 and in a specific way in Romans 9, 10, and 11 when he applies it to the Jews.

The second part of Habakkuk says, “But the righteous will live by his faith.” The only way you and I can be righteous is by faith alone. There is no other way. This, of course, is the central theme of Paul’s message in Romans 3:21 to 7:25.

Finally, he concludes in Romans 8 as an introduction and chapters 12 to 16 with “shall live.” In other words, he who is righteous by faith shall live. It is this section that we are going to study now. In dealing with this section, we need to answer two very important questions:

1. When does a Christian who is justified by faith, who has accepted Christ and been baptized into Christ, begin to live?
2. How should a Christian who is justified by faith live?

The theme is, “He that is righteous by faith shall live.” When do we begin to live? How do we begin to live?

We will be spending the rest of the studies on how we begin to live, but I would like to begin this section with when we begin to live.

The reason I’m doing this that there is

confusion on this point. Many Christians believe that because the word “will” (or “shall,” in some translations) is in the future tense, they interpret Habakkuk 2:4 and Romans 1:17 to mean that only when Christ comes the second time and this mortality will put on immortality, then, and then only, we shall live. But Paul does not give us that answer. Paul says that the moment you have accepted Christ, the moment you are converted, the moment you are baptized into Christ, it is from that time on onward that the just by faith shall live. Turn to Romans chapter six where he reminds the believer that justification by faith begins at conversion or baptism.

Legally, God has justified all men in Christ. But all men will not go to heaven because that legal justification has to be made effective. The reason for that is because God is love. He will not force down our throats what He has paid for us in Christ. When does that legal justification become effective? The moment we believe. Baptism is a confession, a public confession of that faith. Listen to what Paul says in verses three and four of

Romans six, about the experience of baptism. Not the act, because the act sometimes does not always go along with experience. It is the experience that saves us. The act is only an outward confession. Look at Romans 6:3:

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

So baptism is always into Christ. A true baptism is a funeral service because of identification with Christ and Him crucified. Romans 6:4:

We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

When should we begin to live? The moment we rise up out of the water we should walk in newness of life. So whoever is just by faith should begin living the new life from the moment of

baptism, not wait until Christ comes. God wants us to move to that new life right now. Then, in Romans 6:10-13, he takes this truth which we have covered in detail and tells us what its significance is to Christian living:

The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

“The death he died, he died to sin once for all.” Christ brought sin to an end on the cross. Once and for all He brought it to an end.

...But the life he lives, he lives to God.

You mean He did not live to God before He

died? No. He lived to God from the time He was on this earth. But all during His earthly life there was something in Christ that was in contradiction to God and that is the humanity that He assumed: our nature, which Paul says in Romans 8:7 is enmity with God. He had a nature that He assumed. It was not His. It was ours. He took it upon Himself, but this nature was constantly pulling Him away from God. It was pulling Him away from the cross. But Christ never yielded to that nature. So there was always this barrier with which He struggled. All His life, Jesus fought with self the battle that you and I must fight. He never yielded to the self but He fought against it. So all His life He would have to say, “Not my will, but God’s.” How do I know this? Jesus Himself said in Luke 9:23:

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

In other words, “if any man follow me, let him do what I did: let him deny himself, take up the cross and follow me.”

The word “cross” is made up of two pieces of wood and, when you put those two pieces of wood together, you have the cross. One piece, the vertical piece, represents God’s will. The horizontal piece represents my will. And these are always in contradiction. That is what the cross stands for. A true Christian who carries the cross says “Not I” and that is what Christ said all His life.

But this flesh with its law of sin and death was condemned on the cross. Romans 8:3:

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man....

Christ condemned it forever so that, in the resurrection, Christ did not rise with the same human nature. He rose with a glorified nature that is in perfect harmony with God. And that nature

you and I will have at the second coming, but now we must carry the cross in order for God to live in us. “If any man follow me, let him deny himself.” We will come to that when we go to the first three verses of chapter twelve.

Paul is saying in verse ten of Romans six that Christ’s death brought to an end the separation between God and man. He removed once and for all the barrier between people and God and now there is no separation ever to take place between God and mankind. And now in verse eleven of chapter six he says:

In the same way, count yourselves [you who have been baptized into Christ] dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

You must consider yourself dead because, literally, you are not dead in yourself. You are dead in Christ but not in yourself. So you must consider yourself (1) dead to sin and (2) alive to God in Christ Jesus because it is in Christ Jesus you have been baptized. And then the application

of that truth in Romans 6:12-13:

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

Is sin still dwelling in your mortal body? Yes, but don't let it rule you. He equates this human body as an instrument. And he says, "Don't use it. Don't allow the sin driver to control it."

Now this truth Paul expounds in Romans 12 to 16. So when does a Christian begin living? A Christian who stands justified by faith no longer is worried about going to heaven. He has been justified and it is made effective by faith. When does he begin living the Christian life? Now. The moment he is baptized, or the moment he is converted. Now Paul says this in many ways in many places. I can't read all the texts, but I will

give some to you. Romans 8:9-14, which lays the foundation for this, also presents the same thought:

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Then Romans 13:14 puts it all in a nutshell:

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ [which you should have done at baptism],

and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Galatians 5:16:

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Ephesians 4:1 says that:

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Colossians 2:6 puts it very nicely:

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him....

1 John 2:6 is also a good text from the Apostle John:

Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Now all of this is in harmony with what Christ said in John 5:24:

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

And if justification means you have already passed from death to life, then when do you begin the life of justification by faith? Now! That is Paul's presentation.

There are some who are saying, "No, we have to wait for the second coming of Christ when this corruption puts on incorruption, then we shall be able to live." No, folks. God wants you to live now, because the greatest evidence that we can give to the world that we are justified by faith is by our life. Or as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:20:

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

The world wants to see justification by faith. May I repeat something very important? Why has Paul reserved this wonderful truth to the end? And why is this his pattern? All through his epistles he deals with Christian ethics always at the end. I'll tell you why. It is because he is opposing legalism in all of his writings. Legalism says, "You must live a good life first, then I will justify you." The gospel says, "I justify you first, then I want you to live the Christian life." It is the opposite. As one theologian puts it very nicely:

God gave us the law that we may be directed to Christ and, when we come to Christ, He turns us around and turns us back to the law as a standard of Christian living.

That was by an evangelical scholar and his eyes were surely open to the truth. Another text that puts this truth nicely is in 1 John 5:11-13:

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life [notice it is not future tense but now He HAS given us eternal life], and this life is in his

Son. He who has the Son has life [not future tense but present tense: he already has life if he is in the Son]; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God [So when does the believer have life? Now!] so that you may know that you have [not WILL have but you HAVE] eternal life.

As long as you believe, you have life. The trouble is the world needs to see that life. The world doesn't need to see how good you are. The world needs to see Christ in you. Or, as Paul puts it in Colossians 1:27:

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Now lets go to Romans 12:1, where he's saying, “I entreat you, I beseech you, I appeal to you, I exhort you...”:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers [believers in

Christ], in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

“In view of God’s mercy,” in view of righteousness by faith. Please remember, we are not saved because of our righteousness but, by His mercy, He saves us.

There are three words here that we’ll look at in more detail. The first is the word “offer,” or “present” in some translations. “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer.” This is in what we call the aorist tense. To correctly interpret that word, we should say, “make a decisive decision.” Believers, make a decisive decision, a decision of the will. What is the decision you must make?

The decision you must make is to offer up your body not to be sacrificed on a cross or to be beheaded or shot as a martyr — that may come in the future — but to present your body as a living sacrifice.

Why does he call it a living sacrifice? When you accepted Christ the only change that took place in you was the change in your mind, in your will. The word “repentance” comes from two Greek words, meta noia. Noia comes from the word nos. You get the word “knowledge” from that. Meta noia means a change of mind. But your nature has not changed one iota. In other words, you have a mind that wants to follow God but you have a nature that is anti-God and not subject to His law. When you present this body, which is dominated by the law of sin, it does not have to be controlled by it, but it is dominated, you are presenting as a living sacrifice. Hebrews 2:18:

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

How often was Christ tempted? Hebrews 4:15 tells us that He was tempted in all points such as we are:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.

How often are you tempted? I don't know about you but I am tempted day and night. Sometimes even in my sleep I'm tempted. The devil doesn't believe in giving us rest. Hebrews 2:18 says He suffered:

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Why did He suffer being tempted? And what does the suffering signify? Well, Peter answers that question in 1 Peter 4:1:

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body [in His humanity], arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin.

What is Peter telling us? What kind of mind did Christ have? He had a mind that was totally surrendered to the will of God. Remember, in Gethsemane, His flesh said, “Why should you go to the cross?” And it produced drops of blood, but Jesus responded, “Father, not my will but thine be done.”

He was presenting His body. He presented His body all through His life as a living sacrifice. Then, on the cross, He presented His body as an ultimate sacrifice. Do you know why He did it? In order to save us. By presenting His body as a living sacrifice, God produced righteousness in Him. By presenting His body as an ultimate sacrifice, God met the justice of the law for us. Thus, by His doing and His dying, we have a perfect Savior.

But God is not asking you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice in order that you might be saved. Then why should we do it? By the mercies of God. If God gave Himself for us, then we, in turn, should be willing to offer ourselves for

His cause. Turn to 2 Corinthians 5:14:

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

The love of God constrains us. It compels us. It drives us to do what? Once we recognize that when One died, all died, what does the love of God revealed on the cross compel us, constrain us to do? Let us read it from the Bible itself. 2 Corinthians 5:15:

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

He died, not the first death for all, but the second death for all. That's why Revelation 20:6 says that the believers will never have to experience the second death themselves. He died for all. Why? Not only to save us, but that we should live for Christ.

The question I want to ask you is, “Are you willing to present your bodies a living sacrifice?” Romans 12:1:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship.

In other words, for me now onward is not to live for myself but for Christ. Because of this, Paul says in Romans 12:2:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

In other words, “do not fit yourself into the world’s mold.” This is one of the biggest problems we face here.

It wasn’t long after coming to America I

discovered this was one of the major problems that we face here in America. I'll tell you why. When I go and preach the gospel to the pagans in Africa, to the Animists, and they become Christians, they know that they are saying good-bye to paganism in exchange for Christianity. Sso it is a common practice among Africans when they are baptized to actually change their names. They actually change their names, just like Paul did when he was converted from Judaism. He changed his name from Saul to Paul. What does this signify? It means that they are no longer belonging to the world.

But here is the problem in this country. For years in school every morning, public or private school, we have to say, "This is one nation under God." So it has caused a problem because we make no distinction between our culture and Christianity. Because it's "one nation under God." But let me ask you a question. In practice, is this really one nation under God? Because we have not made a distinction between the cultural patterns of our country and the Christian lifestyle, whatever

the trend is of the culture, the church follows. You look at the culture of the country and look at the direction of the church. It doesn't take long for the church to change. And we follow in the same footsteps, whether it's divorce, lifestyle, you name it, and this has caused a major problem.

I want to repeat there are two things of which you must be aware as a Christian.

1. You have died to the world.
2. You no longer belong to the world system.

You are living in the world, but you are not of the world. When Jesus prayed, in John 17:15, He said:

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

Now what's the difference. Is the difference only in outward acts? No. We need to go deeper than that. I want to give you some texts. First go to 1 John 2, where we see the difference between

the world and the church. I will expound on this in more detail as we go along but I'm just laying the foundation. What's the foundation? Every Christian must realize that when you is born in the kingdom of God, you are born crucified. That's the title of this chapter. I've taken it from a French theologian. He said, "Every Christian is born crucified." 1 John 2:15,16:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.

Now what did he mean by "Do not love the world"? He did not mean don't love the people of the world. We must love the people of the world because they are children of God at least by by the cross, even though they don't recognize it.

You cannot belong to this worldly kingdom and the kingdom of heaven at the same time. They are

two opposite kingdoms. What does he mean by “the world”? Verse sixteen mentions the three driving forces that control the worldly person.

1. “The cravings of sinful man,” in some translations called “the lust of the flesh.” What he feels he wants. He wants everything.

2. “The lust of his eyes.” What he sees, he wants. He’s keeping up with the Joneses.

3. “The boasting of what he has and does,” sometimes called “the pride of life.” He always wants to go up and up and up. He’s not willing to go down. If you don’t believe me, ask an eighth grader, “How would you like to go to seventh grade next year?” I have yet to see a young pastor of a big church who voluntarily wants to go to a small church. Even in the church, we want to go up and up and up.

We have three kinds of missionaries. I worked 18 years in Africa and observed three kinds of missionaries. One is the “tourist missionary.”

They are always carrying their camera. Africa has a lot of game to offer them. The second kind I call “political missionaries,” because you cannot rise to the General Conference unless you have mission service. So some come there for one term to qualify for promotion. But there is a third group, “genuine missionaries” who come there to witness Christ and forget self. That is the problem with the world. It’s looking for self. Now turn in contrast to Galatians 5:24:

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

That’s the mentality of the Christian. Please turn to chapter six of Galatians. In Galatians 6:12 Paul says:

Those who want to make a good impression outwardly [legalists] are trying to compel you to be circumcised. The only reason they do this is to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ.

Do you know what Paul is saying here? Those who are legalistic are following rules because they want to give glory to themselves. The gospel, the cross gives glory to God and, therefore, it means swallowing your pride. But now look at verse fourteen. Verse twelve is dealing with the legalist but verse fourteen is dealing with the true Christian. Galatians 6:14:

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

A Christian is born crucified. Back to Romans 12:2-3:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will. For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the

measure of faith God has given you.

Paul is saying, “Please, don’t fit into the world’s mold but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” What God wants to see in you and me is a transformation of the mind. The performance will take care of itself. There are too many Adventists who are trying to get perfection of performance in preparation for the second coming of Christ, or the time of trouble.

So one day I sat down and I spent hours looking at every statement in the Spirit of Prophecy where the word “character” appears. I discovered that what Ellen G. White also teaches — which is in harmony with Paul — is the perfection of the human mind-character. In other words, the mind set needs to be perfected, the performance God will take care of. She calls it the cleansing of the soul temple. Not the performance, but the soul temple.

In other words, we need to have a mind that is totally surrendered to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The performance God will take care of.

So what Paul is saying here is, “Don’t conform to the world but be transformed by renewing the mind.” Philippians 2:5:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

“Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus.” But also read verses one to four of Philippians 2:

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

When you have the mind of Christ, God will reveal to you what is the good and acceptable

service that He expects from you. He doesn't expect the same thing from everybody. Different people have a different measure of faith. Therefore, he concludes (Romans 12:3):

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

What's the foundation of Christian living? It's back to the formula, "Not I, but Christ." That is what you need to remind yourself of daily. A Christian is justified. He stands perfect before God. But when does he begin to live as a justified Christian? Now! Daily! Renew your minds and pray to God, "Father, you have given me your Son. I am crucified with Him and now I want Him to live in me, and the life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself for me." May this be your prayer, I pray in Jesus' name.

Chapter 32

The Body of Christ

(Romans 12:4-8)

“When does a Christian who is justified by faith begin living?” There are many Christians who say that we begin living at the second coming of Christ. But that is not Paul’s teaching. We begin living the “justified by faith” life the moment we are converted, from the moment we have been baptized by faith into Jesus Christ. In other words, the moment we accept Christ as our righteousness, the moment we surrender this Adamic, sinful life to the cross where it belongs and in exchange accept the life of Christ, that moment we begin to walk in newness of life.

From Romans 12:3,4 onwards, right up to the end of chapter 16, Paul is giving us a series of exhortations. How should a person live who is already justified by faith? In other words, Christian living is the fruits of justification by faith.

In our passage today, verses four to eight, Paul is beginning with the church because Christian living begins in the church first. Then it goes out in our relationships to the world, towards our government, towards different people and different situations.

I want you to look at verse three. It is the transitional text. In verses one and two Paul reminds us that we, as Christians, should no longer walk in the course of this world. We need to be transformed by reminding ourselves that we are no longer of the world. We are walking in newness of life. Then in verse three he goes on to say:

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

That word “faith” needs to be explained because the word “faith” has more than one meaning in the New Testament. We need to get

the correct definition of faith here because in this verse Paul is not talking about the believer's faith in Christ. That's the primary meaning of faith but the word is used in many other ways in the New Testament. For example, when we studied Romans 3:31, there the word "faith" was referring to the doctrine of justification by faith. And if you go to Galatians 3:24,25, there the word "faith" is used to refer to Christ Himself. When he said, "now that faith has come," he meant before Christ came. What about the word "faith" in verse three of Romans twelve? The word faith here, according to the context, is referring to the spiritual gift that you and I received, every believer received, at conversion which is to empower us to function within the church which is the body of Christ. For example, look at Romans 12:6:

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith.

The word faith here is a gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now we are coming here to a very

important section, because the gospel is not a theory. It is not an idea. It is a truth that has to be experienced. We are spending so much time discussing justification by faith, we are spending so much time arguing about justification by faith, but in the New Testament the doctrine of justification by faith is not something to be argued about or discussed but to be experienced. Paul is giving us some very good counsel on how we can experience this. First, I want you to look at what he says in verses four and five, because that's the key statement in our passage today:

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Let us study this step by step. First of all, baptism in the New Testament as a subjective experience. I'm not talking about the experience in which the pastor puts you in the water, but as a spiritual experience is always into Christ. We saw

this when we studied Romans 6. Baptism is always into Christ.

Another passage dealing with the same area is found in 1 Corinthians 12. In verse thirteen of chapter twelve, Paul makes this statement:

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

In other words, Christianity is entering into Christ. When we are baptized into Christ, we are identifying ourselves with Jesus Christ and Him crucified, which means His death is our death, his burial is our burial, and His resurrection is our resurrection.

Therefore, when a Christian is baptized into Christ, subjectively, two things take place in his mind. That's why Paul says we need to renew our mind, to remind ourselves who we are. Number one, we have said good-bye, by our faith and baptism, to our Adamic life that we were born

with, which stands condemned and which did die on the cross. So we have said “goodbye” to that.

In exchange, we have accepted the life of Christ, which becomes ours through the new birth experience. We have accepted this life of Christ now as our life. This exchange brings about a tremendous and dynamic change in us, in our status, in our position, and in the way we look at things and the way we do things.

When we were unconverted, when we were still living in the old life, we belonged to the world. I am not talking of the physical or the political but I am talking of the spiritual world. We belonged to the world that was under Satan, the evil one. When we became Christians, we said good-bye to that citizenship and we became members of the body of Christ, which the New Testament defines as the church. In fact, the word “church” comes from two Greek words *ek klesia*, which means “a called-out people.” We are a special people of God. This means that we must now have a different attitude.

While I was of the world I belonged to a nation, I belonged to a society, I belonged to a tribe. I could belong to a class, I could belong to a group and, therefore, the world is full of distinctions. You had to belong to a certain clique to belong or you have to have some qualifications to belong to a certain clique. The rich have a clique, the educated have their certain clique, and, in fact, if you don't have a Ph.D., you don't belong to their clique. You are looked upon as an outsider. So in the world we have all kinds of distinctions, all kinds of factions, but when you become a Christian, all distinctions must go. Why? Well, let's see what the text says. 1 Corinthians 12:14:

For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free □ and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many.

He on goes to explain that, just as the human body has many members or parts, the church has many members but we are one body. There must be no distinction in the church. Paul says in

Galatians 3:27-28 that, when you are baptized into Christ, you have put on Christ:

...For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

There is no male, there is no female. There is no slave and there is no master. We are all one in Christ. This is radical, but this is one of the major distinctions.

When we are baptized into Christ, not all of us belong to the same part of the body of Christ. One may be the hand. One may be the ear. One may be the eye. How are we to function in the body of Christ? God has given every member a gift. The next thing I want you to notice is the reason that God gave you that gift. 1 Corinthians 12:7:

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

In other words, God has given each believer a gift so that he or she may function within the church so that the whole church may benefit. I have a hand but, I'll tell you, this hand is essential not only for the hand but for the whole body. I have eyes and my eyes are essential to the whole body. That's what Paul expounds in 1 Corinthians 12:15 and onwards:

If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body.

Then he goes to the ear and he goes to the hearing. Imagine that I see something very important in the distance. I can't see it properly and I need to get closer. What do I need to get closer? The eye can't go by itself. It needs the legs.

There is something that you need to know which is very important. There was a time when the political scientist was trying to prove evolution would use the argument of what they called the

vestigial organs, i.e., the organs of the human body that are no longer essential. I believe in the 19th Century there were approximately 100 vestigial organs, “organs that used to be useful while we were animals but now we don’t need them”: the appendix, the tonsils, the coccyx — they had a whole list of them. The problem was that it wasn’t because they weren’t useful but medical men had not discovered their use. That was the problem. Today they have been reduced to almost nothing.

What I’m saying is that there is no member of the church that is a vestigial organ. Every member — irrespective of the age, or of qualifications, or education — has a part to play and we must restore this. We must not get the idea that the work of running the church is the work of the pastor and we are only spectators. That is so in football but not in the church. In the church, every part has to function.

Tell me, what would happen if one of your human parts did not function? Let us say your legs no longer could walk. Who suffers, only the legs?

No, the whole body suffers. So please remember, Paul is saying that every member has a part. Look at the counsel he gives in Romans 12:6-8:

We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Here we are told we all have different gifts, according to the grace, not according to your natural ability, but "according to the grace that is given to us let us use them."

Then he gives a list of gifts. If you have the gift of prophecy, use it. If you have the gift of ministry, use it. If you have the gift of teaching, use it. If you have the gift of counseling, use it. God has even given some the gift of giving. God has given some members extra wealth that it may

be used for the glory of God.

Then God has a gift of mercy. It's a special gift. We need it in the church. Remember, Paul and Barnabas argued over Mark. Paul was a very strong-minded, strong-willed person. He did not believe in failure. So when Mark failed the first time, he would not give him a second chance. But Barnabas had the gift of mercy. He said, "Look, man, this is just a young kid, give him another chance."

Paul said, "Nothing doing." So they separated and Barnabas took Mark and gave him a second chance and Mark did prove that, given a second chance, he was a faithful servant. But I thank God for Paul. Years later he said, "Mark, please come to me. I need you." What would Paul have said if Barnabas wasn't there. We thank God for those who take people under their wings and are patient with them.

But what is Paul saying to us in this passage we are covering? He's saying that the church is the

body of Christ. He is also saying, “This body has many members and this body, in order for it to function as a unit, must have all its members, all its parts in working order.” This is the crying need of our church today. I don’t mean just the local church but the Christian Church.

I want to give some practical counsel coming from the word of God on how we should apply this truth to ourselves. First, let us be very clear that when you accept Christ you are accepting salvation. Salvation is not only from death to life. It is not only from condemnation to justification. The first experience subjectively of salvation is from the world into the church and the church is the body of Christ. In John 15:19, Jesus talking to His disciples says:

If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

“You no longer belong to the world. You

belong to Me.” In 1 John 5:19, John tells us:

We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

In Galatians 6:14 Paul says:

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

“I don’t belong to the world because by the cross of Christ I have been crucified to the world and the world has been crucified to me.” We are a special people, a peculiar people. That’s number one. Number two, we belong to the body of Christ. Now, everybody needs a boss. Who is the boss? If you turn to Ephesians 5:23 and Colossians 1:18, Paul tells us that the boss of this body is Jesus Christ:

For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which

he is the Savior.

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the first-born from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

I would like to emphasize our loyalty to Christ.

It took me four years from the time I gave up my Roman Catholic faith to become an Adventist. One of the things that kept me back was my loyalty to the church, the organization. Here was the oldest church in history. Here was the largest church in Christendom. How can they be wrong and these few people, the Adventists be right? It is important that our loyalty is to Jesus Christ. Every other loyalty will take place correctly if our loyalty to Christ is correct. Because He's the One who will direct us. We must be loyal to Christ because the church as an organization will disintegrate in the time of trouble but Christ is our Lord and Master. Our loyalty must be to Him. If our loyalty is correct to Him, He will be sure that our loyalty

to the brethren, to the organization will be correct because He will lead us.

Before our conversion, we could do what we liked because, under the world, the principle of self is the principle of Satan's kingdom. Each one lives for himself and herself. In the church, the principle is: "Not I, but Christ." He's the head. I am the servant. He is my Lord and Master and, therefore, I do not have the freedom to do what I like. I have to be led by Him. If He says to me, "I want you to go to Uganda," I don't say, "But there are snakes there." He takes care of snakes. He took care of the one that bit Paul. And if He wants me to die of a snake bite that's His problem, not mine. But I know one thing. He has conquered death so why should I worry? All I must do is obey Him.

But to obey Him we must come to the next point. It is not enough to be having Christ as the head. We must have a living connection to Christ, just like my members have a living connection with the head. What would happen if the nerve that connected my hand to my head was severed?

What would happen? I would still have a hand but it would be dead for it would be useless. It would be cumbersome. It would be a nuisance to our body. It would be paralyzed. There are too many paralyzed members. That's why the church is not functioning as it should.

Remember what Jesus said in John 15:4:

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

He's the vine and we are the branches and these two need to be connected, linked together vitally through prayer, through communication. You don't have to go on your knees all the time. A wonderful thing is that God can read your thoughts. He is the only One who can read your thoughts. Thank God for that. That's one thing you can't hide from. And you can talk to God with your thoughts. You can keep a link to Him with your thoughts. You live for Christ and you die for Him

and you connect yourself with Him. But that is not the way of the world, it is the way of the church.

When we went to Ethiopia, the famine was terrible there. You are familiar with the famine. The Swedish government sent some young pilots because they were unable to take the food to the area of starvation, the roads were so terrible. Even the best trucks with high clearance could not make it. So they sent these small engine planes with daring pilots and they had little hooks under the wings where they would hook bags of wheat and they would fly just like the crop dusters here, very low, and drop those bags and take off. The only trouble was that Ethiopia is very mountainous. The air currents are terrible. So it is a very risky business, just like crop dusting is risky. These young Swedish pilots were doing this.

I spoke to one of them and said, “This is a very risky job. Why are you doing it? There must be a reason. Are you doing it to help these people?”

“Well,” he said, “yes, but that’s not the main

reason.”

I asked, “What’s your main reason?” Well, the Swedish government gave each of these pilots a trip around the world at no charge on any airlines they chose. They also gave them a full scholarship to any university in Sweden. I said to this young man, “If the government wrote to you a letter and said, ‘I’m afraid our budget has to be cut and we cannot give you these blessings,’ would you still serve these people who are starving?”

He answered, “I’m not a fool.” But Christians are fools; they serve for nothing. That is the wonderful privilege of being a Christian.

There is a final point, a very important point. Just like the human body must grow, so must the church. When I say “grow,” I’m not talking numerically. We can increase from one million to six million and still not grow spiritually. There has to be spiritual growth. These are related. If all of us would do our part, if all of us were linked to Christ vitally, we would grow spiritually and that is

one of the main reasons God has given us the gifts.

Let us go back to Ephesians 4:11-13 concerning the gifts which we are studying. Why has God given me the gift? He has given me a gift for the blessing of the church, not for my personal blessing. So when God gives you the gift of tongues, it is not so that you may become convinced that you are saved. That's a misuse of a gift. God gave you a gift so that the church may benefit. But here it is in Ephesians 4:11-13:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

That is God's goal for this church, to grow spiritually, that in unison together we reflect the character of Christ. That is God's goal for this

church.

Here is an opposite example. What happens when we do not use our gifts? We remain stagnant. May I ask you mothers something? It's wonderful to have babies and it's a great privilege for some to even change diapers but tell me how would you like to change the diapers of a baby for 10, 15, or 20 years? You laugh, but that is sometimes what a pastor is faced with. He is changing diapers of members that have been in the church for 20 years. Of course, I'm not talking physically, but spiritually. And I say to my Lord, "When are my members going to grow up? Why are they behaving still like babies?"

Well, we are not the only ones. The Corinthian Church faced the same problem. Turn to 1 Corinthians 3. Paul was the one who evangelized the Corinthian Church but 10 years later he wrote this tough letter to them. In verse one he says:

Brothers, I could not [past tense] address you as spiritual but as worldly — mere infants in Christ.

“When you first accepted Christ, you were a baby in Christ. I accepted that; I fed you with milk. Verse two, I could not give you solid food, that was fine”:

I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

“But the tragedy,” he says, “even now, ten years later, you are still not able to take solid food. I have to feed you with milk.” Now remember, in those days they did not have blenders and they did not have supermarkets where they could buy soft food for babies. They had to mash it. It is one thing to do it for a one-year-old baby but when you do it for a ten-year-old baby it gets a bit too much. Don’t you think so? Now look at verse three:

You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?

I expect babies to fight like cats and dogs,

pulling each other's hair, but when I see grown up people doing it, verbally, it bothers me. When will we grow? If we don't grow, then we are still carnal and, if we are still carnal, we are behaving like (1 Corinthians 3:3) mere men. What did he mean by "mere men"? What he meant was our behavior, our performance, is no different from the worldly people. In other words, the world cannot see the distinction between the church and themselves. This is the greatest stumbling block to evangelism.

People are not converted primarily by the message. They are converted by what they see today. We are living in the scientific age and science demands a demonstration. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 4:20:

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

There were two great Germans in the last century. One was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was raised a Lutheran but he saw where his church had

failed miserably but he did not look at the church. He looked at the word of God and was transformed. He was a wonderful Christian. When he was in this country lecturing at Princeton and Harvard universities, World War Two broke out. His colleagues said, "Please don't go back to Germany."

He said, "If I don't go back to Germany, how can I tell my people to stand up for Christ even though it may cost your life? How can I do that when I myself am remaining in this wonderful free country?" So he gave up the privileges of this country and went back to Germany, was captured by Hitler's men, and, two months before the end of the war, he was executed as a martyr at the age of 39.

There was another German by the name of Frederick Neitzche who was also raised a Lutheran; in fact, his father and his grandfather were both pastors in the Lutheran Church. And he looked at the church and all he saw was hypocrisy. He saw corruption and he gave up the Christian

church and wrote the book AntiChrist and in that book he condemned the Christian Church. He condemns God as a myth. Then he made this statement to the Christian Church: “If you Christians expect me to believe in your Redeemer, you will have to look a lot more redeemed!” Tragedy! How long are we going to be superficial Christians? For as long as we are, the world will not see God in the flesh. They will not see Christ. They will see only human beings who are outwardly trying to behave like good people but inwardly are no different from them. So it is my prayer that as the end of this section that we will remind ourselves of two things:

1. I am dead and my life is hid in Christ.
2. From now onward it is no longer I that the world must see but Christ in me.

When Christ lives in us, His love will permeate through us and we will love each other, for Jesus said in John 13:35:

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

“Everyone will know that you are My disciples when you have love, when you have agape for one another.” We may not see eye to eye in many things but love doesn’t look at differences. It loves in spite of what we are.

I was at Andrews University on furlough. They used to have what they called Eventide at Friday sunset. The young people would gather around and play the guitar and sing. My wife and I joined them and, as we looked in the crowd, we saw a young man. He had long hair that had probably not seen a comb for months. He looked like what we called a hippie. He looked like a real tramp, but his face looked very familiar. I said to Jean, “You know, that fellow looks like Torry Paulson.” He was my roommate at Newbold College. His father was the president of the Norwegian Mission.

She said, “He looks like him.”

He kept looking at us. So we wormed our way gradually right to his side. I turned to him and said, “Are you Torry Paulson?”

He said, “Yes.” We took him home and we had supper together. He told us a very sad story. He said, “I came to this country and I saw so much hypocrisy. Here is the headquarters of the Adventist Church. I expected something better, but I saw hypocrisy. So I gave it all up.” He was at Andrews University, and he gave up his studies there and went to Notre Dame and there he got mixed up with a crowd of young kids that were full of drugs and he joined them and became one of them. After six months, he became very lonely. He found that there was no joy and no peace in that. He wanted to come back to the church. So one Sabbath he crawled and sat in the back. He sat next to a young couple. The lady opened her purse and pulled out a comb and said to him, “Maybe you’d like to use this before you come in.”

He walked out and he said, “I don’t want to step into this church. Where will I go?” Three

months later he came back and said, “Let me try.” That’s when we met him.

Stop looking at people from the outside! They are children of God. Let us remember that God works from inside and He will clean the outside as we grow. It is my prayer that each one of us will function in the work that God has given us to do. I do not know what gift you have been given. There are now programs that tell you which gift you have. I don’t know that we need programs to discover that. God will tell you. But I’ll tell you one thing, the problem is not knowing your gift. The problem is using it.

Remember that that gift has nothing to do with your natural ability. I’m an introvert by nature. I dreaded the thought of standing behind this pulpit but, by the grace of God, I am what I am. I pray that you will be the same. That’s my prayer for this church that we will grow, not numerically only (that is not the most important part), but we will grow spiritually. When we grow spiritually, the numerical numbers will come. It is a natural result

of it. May God bless this church that we may remember who we are. We are members of the body of Christ and, therefore, members of each other. We need each other. In closing, look at 1 Corinthians 12:25-27:

...So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

We must have the same concern for each other. There must be no schism in the church. If one suffers, all suffer. If one rejoices, how many get jealous? None. We all rejoice with that person.

May God bless you.

Chapter 33

Into His Likeness

(Romans 12:9-21)

Have you ever looked at Romans 12:9-21 seriously enough? When you look at it, you will wonder how on earth it is possible for anyone to do what Paul is suggesting for the Christian to do. But to understand where Paul is coming from, we need to remember that chapter 12 really is a continuation of chapter eight. Chapters nine, 10, and 11 are like an appendix in the middle of the book. You could go directly from chapter eight to chapter 12.

What Paul is doing here in chapter 12:9-21 is expounding two verses that he has written down in chapter eight. So I want you to turn to chapter eight first to get the background to where Paul is coming from. Verses 29 and 30 are the two relevant texts, so let's look at them. We have covered these two verses but I want to remind you so that you realize where Paul is coming from.

Verse 29 reads like this:

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son [i.e., Christ], that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

We have already dealt with those two words found in verse 29, words that have brought a lot of controversy, a lot of problems, a lot of issues in the Christian Church. This is one of the key texts used by the Calvinists. The Calvinists believe that God had elected only a certain segment, a certain number of the human race to be saved. And this is one of the verses they use to prove their point.

I would like to remind you what we looked at concerning these two words. The word “foreknew” does not mean “to choose.” Some of your modern translations will use the word “choose,” but that is not what the Greek word means. It means “to know beforehand.” The word “predestined” does mean to choose. So what is Paul saying here in verse 29? Those whom He

knew beforehand concerning what? When Jesus came into this world, He came to save who? All people. The New Testament is absolutely clear: God's purpose is that all people should be saved and, on the cross, Jesus died for all mankind. But will all people go to heaven? The answer is no. Why not? Because this salvation fulfilled in Christ for all people is God's gift to the sinful human race and, like any gift, you cannot enjoy it until you receive it. And since God created us with a free choice, and since God is love, He will not coerce, He will not force us to accept that gift.

But God knows beforehand those who will accept the gift. That doesn't mean He hasn't saved the others. It doesn't mean that He doesn't plead with the others. He knows beforehand because He is God, He knows beforehand who will accept that gift. Verse 29 is dealing with those people, that is, with believers.

So Paul is saying in verse 29, "Whom God knows beforehand will accept the gift, He has something for them in mind. He has predestined,

He has chosen them to be conformed to the image of His Son.”

You see, God has chosen all men to be saved. So the issue here is not God’s choice in terms of salvation but He is dealing here with God’s choice for those who would accept the gospel whom He foreknew. In other words, God’s plan for the world is salvation. What is God’s plan for the believer? Only to take them to heaven? No. That is His plan but that is not all; He has more than that in His mind.

God’s plan is for those who accept their salvation in Christ is that their characters are transformed until they reflect the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. He calls Christ “the Firstborn” among the brethren. In English, the word “firstborn” simply means the first child among many children. But, in the Bible, the word “firstborn” has a deeper meaning than simply the first. In this context, it means the prototype.

When the U.S. Navy brings out a new plane,

they first make a prototype and they test it. If it works, and if it is financially possible, then they make many of them. Jesus is presented here not as a Saviour, because He is the Saviour of all people, but, to the believer, He is not only a Saviour but He is a prototype. He's our example. Please remember that we must never, never use Christ as an example in terms of salvation. He is not our example in terms of salvation. Salvation is a gift for sinners. But He is an example for Christian living.

That's what chapters 12 through 16 of Romans are dealing with. Christian living has a pattern and the pattern is Christ. Therefore, he says in verse 30:

And those he predestined [i.e., chose to conform to the image of His Son], he also called; those he called; he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

So the first thing that God does when you accept His gift is that He wants you to know that

you stand perfect in His eyes in His Son Jesus Christ. He has justified all men legally but that justification becomes effective the moment you accept Christ. But He doesn't stop there:

Those he justified, he also glorified.

The question is, when does He glorify the believer? Most Christians say when He comes the second time. And Paul says "No, what He does at the second coming is only glorify our bodies, when this corruption puts on incorruption."

But He begins glorifying us in terms of our character, in terms of our performance, the moment we believe. And we covered this, we established the fact that the just by faith shall live and the living of the just by faith begins at conversion.

In Romans 12, Paul explains how a Christian should behave. So Romans 12:9-21 is a revelation of what should characterize a true Christian. It is impossible for us to imitate Christ. The flesh cannot imitate Christ. It can camouflage itself to

look like Christ. The only way we can fulfil in our lives what Paul is suggesting here is when we walk in the Spirit, when we allow Christ, who is now dwelling in us, to walk in us. What does Paul say first? I'm reading from the New King James Version, which is identical to the Greek. Romans 12:9a:

Let love be without hypocrisy.

The New International Version says:

Love must be sincere.

There are two kinds of love. Human love is hypocritical, even at its very best. I'll tell you why: because human love is always polluted with self, even though sometimes the self is hidden in our subconscious and we ourselves may not be aware of it. Paul is not asking for us to love like human beings. He says "let agape, God's love, be manifested through us." When God's love is manifested through us, it is genuine. Let the love of God be manifested through us. Let genuine love

be seen among you. Remember what Jesus said in John 13:35:

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love [have agape for] one another.

The second thing is that a person who's controlled by this love will hate evil. Romans 12:9b:

Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Do you know God hates sin? He loves the sinner but He hates sin. Do you know why? Because He loves the sinner. What does sin do to the sinner? It destroys him. It hurts him. God cannot love sinners and not hate sin. We should hate evil not because it punishes us. We should hate evil because we love Christ. Why? What did our sins do to Christ? It crucified Him. If you love Christ, you must hate sin.

A legalist doesn't hate sin. What he hates is the punishment of sin. But a true Christian should hate

evil. Instead, he should “cling to what is good.”

That word “cling” is the same word used for the word “glue.” Glue yourself to good or to righteousness.

One day at a workers’ meeting, I cracked the frame of my glasses. One of the workers had a little tube of glue. He said, “This will work.” What he did not tell me was that it was super glue. So I put some on my little finger and then I put my thumb there by mistake and guess what? It took me ages and much struggle to separate those two. Now I’m sure Paul did not know what super glue was. He was living before the technological age. This is what he meant, though: “Let us glue ourselves to that which is good.” Then in verse 10 he uses a very interesting word when he says:

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

He takes two Greek words and joins them together. You see, there are four words in Greek

for “love.” He takes two of them — “phileo,” which is affectionate love between two people, and the other word is “storgay” — and he joins them together and in English we have two different words, “kindly affectionate” [as some translations put it], and he says let the love between Christians be the mixture, the joining of these two. The word “storgay” is love between the family members: brother, sister, cousins, relatives. We say in English, “blood is thicker than water.” That’s “storgay.”

What he is saying in this text is that Christians are not simply members of a church, they belong to the same family. We are one family and, as family members, we should stick to each other, we should love each other as if we belong to the same family.

In this country, Americans may fight among themselves and they say bad things about their government. They may burn flags and other things but, you know, overseas where you are living, where people will down the Americans, the Americans are perfectly united. They stand for

their country. They are one. We need to be one. We are one family, folks, because we share the same life, the life of Christ. When you gossip about another member, you are gossiping about your own family. We are one family, Paul says.

Romans 12:11:

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Some translations say, “not lacking in diligence.” Well, that’s not the best translation. He said, “Stop being lazy. Work for your living.” Of course, in this country, we have some wonderful programs. We have welfare, we have social security. We don’t realize the problems that we face in other places. But in the days of Paul, like it is today in the Third World, people take advantage of Christians.

When you go to any part of the Third World, people recognize that you are new. The first thing they do is to find out how kind you are. Normally,

missionaries are kind-hearted. They have been taught and trained and convinced that Christians should be kind and compassionate. These dear folks know that, so they come to see how kind you are. When they see that you have a compassionate heart, they begin squeezing. They begin taking everything they can: the clothes that you have, the food that you have. They will play on your kindness. We had one lady who was very kind by nature and, after six months, she was exhausted. She nearly had a nervous breakdown. We had to ship her back.

The Christians in Paul's day had the same problem. Some of those Christians were not working. So they were going to church members and saying, "Please, I haven't eaten for two days. Could you please give me some food? I don't have a job." Well, you know human nature hasn't changed over two thousand years. They do the same thing in the Third World. So I had an answer since God gives us instructions.

They would come up to me and say, "You're a

pastor aren't you?"

"Yes," I would answer.

"Well, you should be kind and helpful."

I knew immediately that they wanted something. "What do you need?" I would ask.

"Well, I haven't eaten for two days. Would you please give me food?"

I said, "Sure, but as a pastor I must follow the Bible."

"Yes," they would say, "and the Bible says if people hunger, feed them."

"Let me see what my Bible says," and I would turn to 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10:

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle [sponging on others] and does

not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

"How do you like that?" And these people would look. They had never read that before. No one ever taught them that. Reading on, in verses 11-12:

We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat.

I said, "Well, in the light of this passage, I have

to give you work first before I give you food. I have a garden in the back full of weeds.”

“Oh,” they said, “my back hurts.”

“O.K. I have another job that doesn’t involve the back.” Much of the grain in the Third World is not dried by machines. It is dried on the ground by the sunshine and, when you pick up the grain, guess what you pick up with it? Rocks. So you dare not cook your lentils or your rice without first going through it and picking out the rocks. Otherwise, you will have something to crunch on. It takes time. So I say, “Can you separate, take out the stones?”

“Well,” they would say, “I have an appointment.”

“Best of luck, brother,” I would respond.

That is the way I could sift the genuine from the spongers. Paul is saying here in Romans 12, “Please Christians, do not sponge on others.” Do

not sponge; that is not Christlike. In other words, “Serve hard. Work fervently in spirit, not outwardly but from the heart, in serving the Lord.”

Romans 12:12:

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Christians sometimes come under tribulations. The word tribulations means they are mistreated and, sometimes, because they are Christians.

We are living in a sinful world. There is exploitation. There is mischief and you name it. There is no way you can escape it. We are living in a sinful world and this is what Karl Marx tried to solve. His big question was, “Why are there so few that are living at the expense of so many?” That’s what exploitation is, when you benefit at the expense of somebody else’s work. How do you solve the problem? Karl Marx said, “Fight back.” Paul says, “No. Be patient. Continue steadfast in praying. Ask God for strength.” In the meantime,

verse Romans 12:13:

Share with God's people who are in need.
Practice hospitality.

So there are two things. To "share with God's people who are in need" means that there are church members who genuinely need help. We should help them. So let us give to the church fund that is set up for that purpose. The work of the Christian is not only giving to non-Adventists in community service programs but even our own people need to be helped at times. And we need to do that.

Now look at verses 14, 17, and 19. This is a hard one. They all go together. Romans 12:14:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Have you ever tried that? "Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse." There are Christians who bless because the Bible says so but,

under their breath, they curse. Bless them outwardly and as well as inwardly. Romans 12:17:

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

Have you ever tried that? Romans 12:19:

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

You will say, "But when?" God is patient and He wants us to be patient. Romans 12:20:

On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

This is a quotation from Proverbs 25:21-22. Proverbs is full of good advice. Please remember that good advice is for believers. Have you ever tried to put all this into practice? Have you ever

tried to bless those who persecuted you? Well, I'll tell you, you will meet with nothing but failure. Then how are we to follow this counsel? Remember to whom Paul is talking. He is not talking to men in general. He's talking to believers who are already justified by faith. How then, is this possible for a Christian? By saying, "Not I, but Christ." You will find in Hebrews 10:8 God's desire is not only to dwell in you through the Holy Spirit, but to walk in you. What the world needs to see is not how good we are but how good Christ is.

I'd like to connect this counsel with the Sermon on the Mount. Therefore, turn to Matthew 5:14, which is the foundation to the counsel that He will give later on in this chapter. Jesus is saying to the disciples, to the believers, to those who are justified by faith, who already have peace, who are no longer worried about going to heaven, He is talking to such a group and He says:

You are the light of the world....

Then in verse 16 He says:

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

To understand this, you need to look at the statement Jesus made in verse 14. The English text is not clear, the grammar is not clear so I need to help you. The word “you” in verse 14 is in the plural form. So “you” is plural but the word “light” is singular. So we are many, but we are not many lights. We are one light. Who is that light? If you go to the book of John, chapter one, you will find out who that light is. You will find that light is not John the Baptist but Jesus Christ. Turn to John 1:4-5:

In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

This, of course, is referring to Christ. John 1:9-10:

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.

But I want you to look at verse four again:

In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

When you accept Christ, He gives you life. The believer who's justified receives new life. That life comes from Christ. Now this life needs to be revealed to the world. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 4:7:

But we have this treasure [this light] in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Going back to Matthew 5, how is this light to shine? Jesus gives many examples, but I want to look at one main example in verse 43. He says, "It must not shine like it shines out of the Pharisees."

The Pharisees were legalists. They rejected Christ. What kind of love did they have? Look at Matthew 5:43 in describing the scribes and Pharisees:

You have heard that it was said, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.”

That is human love. You don’t have to be a Christian to do that. But verse 44:

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you....

“I say to you, you Christians, love your enemies.” Exactly what Paul is saying: “Bless them who curse you. Do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.” Why? That you may go to heaven? No. Heaven is a gift. Why? He explains why in the next verse:

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be sons of

your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

When Christ was on this earth, He revealed the Father. He said to Philip and the disciples, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”

He is saying to the believers, “The world needs to see Me in you.” Christ revealed the Father and Christ wants us to reveal Him and, thereby, reveal the Father, that we may be the children of our Father in heaven. Christ then describes the Father’s love: “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good.” Please notice: God never discriminates His love. He doesn’t say, “Well, I’ll bless the Christians because they are my children. I will not bless the world.” God’s love is agape. It’s unconditional. He brings the rain on the just and the unjust. Then, in verses 46-47, Jesus says:

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are

you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

In other words, you don't have to be a Christian to love your friends. But look at verse 48, a verse that many misunderstand because they take it out of context. Matthew 5:48:

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

What did Christ mean by the word “perfect”? In what context did Jesus use that word? He used the word in the terms of love. Jesus loved without discrimination, therefore, we should love without discrimination, just like the Father.

Can you do it by yourself? No. But as you walk in the Spirit, as you renew your mind daily — which is the instruction Paul gives in the early part of chapter twelve — as you allow Christ in you, the hope of glory to walk in you, then you will live like Paul is instructing here in chapter 12, verses nine to 21. You will not be indolent. You will work for

your living. You will help others. You will be patient in your suffering. You will help the needy in your church. You will help the needy in the world. You will bless those who persecute you. You will bless those who curse you. That is simply revealing Christ. In other words, what is God's desire for Christians? That we conform to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ.

In Romans 3:23 Paul tells us that sin has not only robbed us of heaven and of life, but it has robbed us of the glory of God:

...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....

Sin has robbed you and me of the glory of God. Now what is the glory of God? John tells us in John 1:14 that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten Son:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the

One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The glory of God is His self-emptying love. The work of the gospel is not only to save us, not only to take us to heaven, not only to deliver us from condemnation and death, but the gospel also restores in the believer the glory of God.

Once I had to call a student. The way to find his telephone number was to look in the student directory and I did. These kids have little captions. Some of them are meaningless, some of them are crazy, but they have all kinds of captions. This one had: “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” It’s a quotation from Colossians 1:27:

To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

It is my prayer that every one of you will have that as your motto: “Christ in me, the hope of glory.”

When we covered chapter five of Romans, we were given the three blessings of justification by faith:

1. Peace with God.
2. We are standing in grace.
3. Because we are standing in grace, now we have a hope and the hope is to arrive at the glory of God.

In other words, glorification doesn't begin at the second coming of Christ. It begins at conversion.

What is God trying to do in the life of the believer? He's glorifying your character that it may conform to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. At the second coming of Christ, He will glorify your bodies which are sinful and replace them with His glorified body. It is my prayer that this experience will take place now.

So, I'm going to do something I have never

done. I'm going to read from my paraphrase of Romans. I want you to see how I put it in the paraphrase because this is what Paul is saying in chapter 12. I'm going to close by reading the section, "Characteristics of a True Christian":

"What I am saying," says Paul, "is that the unconditional, self-emptying agape love of God, manifested in Christ's holy history, now flows into you through the Holy Spirit. And this must be witnessed through your Christian behavior."

This is God's purpose for each one of us.

The world desperately needs to see Christ. They can't see Him in person. Why? Because He's in heaven. But His body is not in heaven. His body, the church, is on earth. And Christ is saying to the church, "You are the light of the world." You are not many lights. The song This Little Light of Mine is a contradiction of the gospel. Christ is not little nor do we all have little lights. All of us have only one light in us and that is Christ. And when that light shines, a prophecy

will be fulfilled. Revelation 18:1:

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.

“The earth will be lightened with His glory.” And when the world sees the glory of the gospel in you, when they see Christ in you, then they will say, “This is now proof that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.”

Karl Marx was sincere when he tried to redeem the world from selfishness. He came up with the philosophy of Marxism. He produced a book called The Communist Manifesto. I don't know how many of you read it, but I went through it very carefully in Ethiopia. I realized one thing: his objectives were good. This is the statement he made: “Each according to his ability; to each according to his need.” In English it would be, “Those who have must share with those who do not have.” What's wrong with that? Where he went wrong was in his method. He thought his method

was scientific, therefore, it would work. Today Russia is admitting, Poland is admitting, East Germany is admitting that it doesn't work.

Do you know why these countries turned to Marxism? All these countries were Christian countries. Do you know why they turned? Because the church had lost its saltiness. The church had failed to reveal the love of God. There was exploitation in the nineteenth century in Europe. The church had failed, so they said, "Let's try this scientific method."

My question today is, "Where will they turn now?" They are trying now a compromise between Marxism, Socialism, and Capitalism. I guarantee that it will fail, too. The only way it will succeed is if they accept Christ. But they will not accept Christ unless the church proves that the gospel is the power of God.

Are you willing to be a tool in Christ's hands? Forget about salvation; that is yours as a gift. Are you willing now to be used of Christ to lighten this

earth with His glory? Are you willing to let Christ live in you and show the world that it is only when Christ lives in you, that only then we have redemption from selfishness? That is my prayer for you, and for this church, because the world desperately needs to see the power of the gospel. If they don't, then they have nowhere else to turn. They are groping in darkness. They need the light. Will you be willing to be the earthen vessel through which the light shines? I hope you will.

Chapter 34

Loyal Citizens

(Romans 13:1-7)

When I was in Ethiopia, under the Marxists, some of our young people were leaving the church and espousing Marxism. We were concerned. How could we restore these young people? So I felt the only way was to read what Karl Marx had to say, because all I had heard about communism was from people who opposed it. So I sat down and read *The Communist Manifesto*, co-authored by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, and I was quite amazed that they had some very good things to say:

1. They claimed that all men are equal. I thought that was pretty good and I could see how this pastor felt about it because we were having in those days two policy books: one for national workers and one for missionaries and there was a discrepancy

between them. And here was communism saying, “We are all equal.”

2. The second thing that impressed a lot of these young people was that Marxism claimed to be a scientific solution for a scientific age. And that made sense to a lot of them.
3. The third thing they said that was very attractive was that there should be equal distribution of wealth, that those who had must share with those who do not have. And I said this is also in harmony with what the Bible teaches. But as I began to examine their teaching, I realized that there were some weaknesses.

I realized, number one, that this was not a scientific solution for a scientific world. I realized that there were a lot of ideas that were theories but not proven. For example, Karl Marx believed that man was simply moving matter and that, basically, man was good. I felt that was one of his primary

mistakes. He said: “Man is good. The reason why he is selfish is because of his environment, i.e., capitalism.” So his gospel was: “Change the environment, the political and economical environment, and you will redeem man.”

So I looked at these weaknesses and I began having studies with these young people. Gradually, the other churches heard of it and so I was being invited to all kinds of places. One day, the Norwegian Mission, a Lutheran movement, asked me to come and speak in their area. So they rented a huge auditorium and it was packed. When I stepped in there, the Norwegian missionary spoke to me. He pointed out a man in the middle of the auditorium and asked, “Do you know who he is?”

“No,” I said.

He said, “He’s a diehard Marxist, so be very careful what you say.” In a Marxist country, you don’t have the freedom to say what you want.

I told him, “I’ll do my best.”

I gave them a talk and, after it was finished, I gave them time for questions. I noticed that this man wrote something on a piece of paper and handed it to a young kid about 13 or 14 years old in front of him. The kid read the note and put it down and stood up and said, “I have a question.”

I asked, “What’s the question?”

“Please explain Romans 13:1,” he said.

Well, I was not happy to see this Marxist using a kid to do his dirty work. So I thought, “I’ll teach this young fellow a lesson.” Even though I had my Bible with me, I said to him, “What does Romans 13:1 say?”

He didn’t know what it said, because he just read the note: “Please ask this pastor to explain Romans 13:1.” He paused and he was embarrassed and finally said, “Well, I can’t remember.”

I said, “If you can’t remember what it says,

then how can you ask me to explain it? It doesn't make sense." At that, everybody laughed and he got more embarrassed. So I said, "Let me help you. Does anyone have a Bible and will you lend him your Bible?" So one young man took his English Bible and gave it to this young man. I said, "Would you please read for me Romans 13:1?"

Apparently, I had guessed correctly; this kid had never seen a Bible before. He turned to the beginning of the Bible and looked at the contents to find where Romans was. Many Bibles have at the beginning the contents of the Old Testament and the contents of the New Testament at the beginning of the New Testament. He looked in the Old Testament contents for Romans and couldn't find it. He looked and looked. I said to him, "Are you having difficulty finding Romans?"

"Yes," he said, "it is not here."

I said, "It's there all right, but you don't know where to find it, do you?"

“No,” he said.

I said, “I’m sorry to embarrass you, young man, but next time if somebody wants to use you to do their dirty work, tell him to do it himself. Why don’t you hand that paper to the one who gave it to you?” Of course, he gave it to the man behind him and this man was mad because his secret ways were exposed. Then I read the the beginning of Romans 13:1:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities....

I said, “Obviously you believe in this statement.”

“Yes,” he said, “by all means.”

“In that case,” I said, “you also believe in the second half of the verse”:

...for there is no authority except that which

God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

To a communist who is an atheist, that is not acceptable. He said, “In no way do I accept the last half of the verse.”

I said, “You can’t do that. If you accept the first half, then you have to accept the second half.” He was taking a portion of scripture and using it to get the Christians to obey an atheistic government and to do what they were saying to do. At that time, they were saying that we should not go to church and that we should not have Bibles and that we should reject Christ.

This is not something new. All through the history of the Christian Church we have faced this problem. In the Reformation, there were many who felt that now that they had been liberated from the authorities of the government, they could do what they liked. Luther had a hard time trying to get them to toe the line.

In World War II, there was a movement in Germany during Hitler's time called "The German Christians." That's what they called themselves. They taught and insisted that every Christian must give absolute obedience to the governing authority. Of course, there were other Christians who fought against that idea. But these German Christians even quoted from Martin Luther. This is what Luther said (and he was trying to counteract the other camp): "Christians should not refuse under the pretext of religion to obey men, especially evil ones."

So here comes the question: Is Paul teaching in Romans 13 that a Christian must give absolute obedience to the governing authority? This is an important question because one day this country is going to make Sunday laws and enforce them. I have a suspicion that they will use Romans 13:1 to hammer you on the head. So it is important that we understand what Paul is saying.

Let's look, first of all, at the context of this passage. Please remember that, when Paul wrote

that statement to the Roman Christians, he was writing to Christians whose government was anti-Christian. In fact, persecution had not yet really begun, but later on it was this government that martyred the Christians. But why then did Paul make this statement? Why did he say, “You Christians must be subject to the governing authority”?

He made a statement in Romans 12:2 which he knew could be misunderstood. The statement is that, “We must not be conformed to the world”:

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is — his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

Paul realized that statement could be misunderstood. He realized that the Christians in Rome would say, “Since we don’t belong to the world and we are not to conform to the world, we don’t have to obey the governments of this world.

And we don't have to pay tax.”

Wouldn't that be wonderful? So Paul is trying to make it clear. But I want you to know in which context he makes that statement because we need to read that admonition in the context in which he is saying it.

Paul is not discussing the Christian attitude towards governors and governments in every aspect, in this passage, but in a specific area, the area of law and order. What Paul is saying here is that, because of the sinful human world in which we live, it is essential that God puts restrictions and begins to curb evil. Because if God did not put restrictions, we would have wiped ourselves out long ago. Let me give you an example.

Over the period of just a few months, we in America faced two major disasters: Hurricane Hugo and an earthquake in San Francisco [California]. In both cases, the government sent in soldiers and the police force was increased. Why? Because of what people would do. They would

take advantage of the situation and there would be looting. That is sinful nature in man. What Paul is saying here is that God had ordained civil authorities to keep this world in law and order. In other words, to curb crime. Can you imagine what would happen to a country without civil authority? We faced that in Uganda for a while and, I'll tell you, it was anarchy. Even the worst government is better than no government at all. But what Paul is saying is in verse two onward. Romans 13:2-4:

Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. [Then he explains what he meant.] For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

In other words, as soon as this world became sinful, God ordained governments. He ordained civil authorities to restrict the evil practices of sinful man.

We know that communism is an atheistic system, but do you know that in China today there is no stealing, there is no prostitution? Do you know why? Because the government has put a stop to that. The method they used was brutal, but they have put a stop to it. What God is saying here, through Paul, is that He has not only ordained civil authorities but He has also given them the right to execute judgment when people disobey the rules of the country.

I go to the prison ministry once a month and I go to the area where most of the prisoners are hard-core criminals. Most of them are there for life. Three of them have told me that there is no way that they can even have a parole. The tragedy is that they are all young fellows. They will spend the rest of their lives in a penitentiary. One of them came to me and asked, “Do you believe in

capital punishment?”

Of course, I did not know what crime he had committed and I didn't know if he was sentenced to some kind of electric chair or something but he asked me this question. He was very sincere. I asked him, “What does the Bible say?”

He said, “The Bible says, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’”

“You are right,” I said, “but remember, that God has given the government, the civil authority the power to execute capital punishment.”

“Show it to me,” he said.

“Sure,” I said. So I took him to Leviticus 24 when Israel was a theocracy and I read to him Leviticus 24:17:

If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death.

“I didn't write that,” I said. “Moses wrote it

and it was given to him by God.” Leviticus 24:18-20:

Anyone who takes the life of someone’s animal must make restitution — life for life. If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured.

That was God’s instruction to the civil authorities. That is what Paul is saying:

He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

So when the government practices capital punishment, God has given it this authority. This prisoner did not like that. He said “No.” I said, “Then, you are going against the word of God.” I told him, “Maybe if this country practised more punishment as the Bible says, maybe we would have less crime.”

I said, “You know, I can’t understand this place. You can watch T.V. You have books to read. They pay you for the work you do and they give you excellent food. This, to me, is not punishment. This is enjoying life at the expense of my tax money.” I said, “I wish you were in Africa. They would put sense into your head. You wouldn’t need all these years.”

Paul is saying here that Christians should be good, loyal citizens. He gives the reason why in verse five:

Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

In other words, a Christian must do what is right because he wants to do what is right, not because he’s scared of the policeman. He must pay his taxes because he believes that these men, even though some of them do evil things, are agents of God.

But now comes the real question: Should we obey the government in every respect? Paul is not discussing that. Paul, himself, did not obey the government in every respect. The early Christians did not obey in all respects. Write these two texts next to Romans 13:1 because you need to realize that there is a fundamental principle taught in the New Testament. First, listen to the words of Jesus Christ in Mark 12. Here is a group of pharisees who came to Jesus. They are not sincere, but I want you to notice how Jesus responded. Mark 12:13-17:

Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Should we pay or shouldn’t we?” But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” They brought the coin, and he asked them,

“Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?”
“Caesar’s,” they replied. Then Jesus said to them,
“Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what
is God’s.”

“Should we pay taxes?” That was the question.
Of course, Jesus saw through it and realized that
they were trying to trap Him.

There are two kingdoms in this world: the
kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world.
We have to be subject to both. But here comes the
problem. Which is superior, the kingdom of God
or the kingdom of man? That’s the number one
question that we must have fully in our mind.
Obviously, the New Testament is clear. Question
number two: What happens when the kingdom of
God and the kingdom of this world clash in their
demands?

Look at Acts 5:28 and onward. The Sanhedrin
was the governing body of the Jewish nation. This
is what the Sanhedrin said to the disciples.

“We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.”

That’s a command that came from the highest authority. Did the disciples obey them? Verse 29:

Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men!”

When there is a clash between God’s ways and men’s ways, then you must put God first. They had a committee meeting and then Gamaliel spoke to them and, in verse 40 of chapter five we read:

His speech [Gamaliel’s] persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

And did the disciples say, “Yes, council, we will obey you and never preach Christ again”? Did they do that? No! Verse 41:

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

Not only should we put God first, but, if it involves punishment, if it involves imprisonment, we should be happy to suffer for His sake. Paul, himself, was flogged. He was imprisoned because he preached Christ and because he disobeyed the government in that area. But they were not only rejoicing. Look at verse 42:

Day after day, in the temple courts [not in some hidden place but in the temple] and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

Paul is saying here that God has ordained the civil authorities to keep law and order in every country and every state. How should Christians relate to those rules and regulations which keep law and order? We should obey them, not out of fear only but because we Christians believe in good

and not in evil.

But when the time comes when the government goes beyond that authority and makes laws that oppose the God of heaven, then we have to do what Daniel did and what the apostles did and what Paul himself did: we have to obey God rather than men, no matter what it costs us.

On the one hand, Christians should be loyal citizens but they should be loyal citizens as long as their loyalty does not infringe on their loyalty to God. That is what Paul is saying in Romans 13. On the one hand, let us be looked upon as loyal citizens of America and, on the other hand, when the blue laws do come and the government says to us that we have to work on the Sabbath, then we should say, “We have to obey God rather than man.”

Paul is not saying here that we ought to give implicit obedience, unquestioning obedience but only obedience in terms of right and wrong. So may God bless us that we as Christians are

recognized in this country not only as loyal citizens but genuine Christians. That's my prayer in Jesus name.

Chapter 35

Fulfilling the Royal Law

(Romans 13:8-14)

In the previous chapter, we studied the first half of Romans 13 where Paul discussed the Christian's relationship to the civil authorities or to the government. Now, we will study the second half of Romans 13, beginning with verse eight and ending with verse 14 where Paul discusses the love relationship that Christians should have towards their neighbors. A neighbor can be someone who lives next to us or anyone we come in contact with, at work or in our daily lives. Jesus was clear that anyone who needs our help or anyone we are confronted with in our sphere of living becomes our neighbor.

How should Christians deal with their neighbor? What should be the relationship of a Christian to his or her neighbors? Let us read Romans 13:8-14:

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

This is a tremendous passage when it comes to

Christian living. It relates to our relationship to each other and to our fellowmen. As mentioned before, a Christian is not of this world but is still living in this world. Because the Bible teaches that we are not of this world, there are many Christians, especially in the past, who went to monasteries to live in seclusion where they would have no contact with the world. But this is not God's intention for the Christian. In Jesus' prayer to His Father in John 17:15, He clearly said:

My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

One of the great purposes God has for every Christian is to reflect, to the world, to our neighbors, the love that we have experienced through the gospel. In Romans 13:8, Paul clearly states that he who loves another has fulfilled the law. There are two ways to look at the law of God — in the letter or in the spirit. Or, to put it another way, we can look at the law as a method of salvation or as a standard of Christian living. Unfortunately, the Jews looked at the law as the

letter or as the method of salvation. To them, the law was “do this” or “do not do that.”

We find an illustration in Matthew 22:36, where some great scholars of Judaism approached Jesus to ask Him a question:

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

The book of the law is the Torah. Instead of giving rules, Jesus said [Matthew 22:37-40]:

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

To God, the law is not a set of rules. This is what man has turned the law into, but, to God, the law is a relationship of love towards God and towards our fellow men.

We will study the distinction between the law as a method of salvation and the law as a standard of Christian living. Here, Paul is saying that the fulfillment of the law, as God looks at it, is loving your neighbor as yourself [Romans 13, last part of verse nine].

To understand the meaning of this statement, we must understand that human love is a U-turn of God's unconditional love. When God created Adam and Eve, the book of Genesis tells us they were created in God's image. Genesis 1:26:

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...."

In 1 John 4:8, John tells us that God is love:

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

So when God created mankind, He created us, in Adam, with a nature which was in harmony with

God's nature and character. This is God's unconditional love which is self-emptying and changeless.

Unfortunately, when Eve sinned and brought the forbidden fruit to Adam, he realized that Eve had committed the act of sin and that she was to die. But he loved her even more than himself, because his very nature was this unconditional love. So he was willing to die with her. This is how much Adam loved his wife before the Fall. But the moment he ate the forbidden fruit, his nature made a U-turn so that the love, which went out unconditionally to Eve and others, now changed its direction to himself. This is what we were born with, a nature which is egocentric.

Then, when God came to visit Adam and Eve that evening, this love was no longer towards Eve but to himself. So, when God asked Adam, "Why did you sin?" Adam blamed God for giving him a defective wife. Genesis 3:11-12:

And [God] said, "Who told you that you were

naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

What happened to his love for Eve before his Fall? It made a U-turn. Therefore, human love has all the qualities of God’s love except the direction. It is towards self so that we love ourselves unconditionally, everlastingly, and more than we love anyone or anything else. This is our human predicament. Paul says here that genuine law-keeping is loving our neighbor in the same way that we love ourselves: unconditionally and everlastingly.

Unfortunately, man cannot do this in and of himself. An example of this is found in Matthew 19:16. A young man asks, “What good thing must I do to get eternal life?” Here was a sinner, trying to do good, in order to be saved. Jesus tried to correct him by saying that there is nobody good except God. “But,” He added, “if you want to go to heaven by being good, keep the

commandments.” The young man asked, “Which ones?” Then, Jesus quoted to him the commandments that Paul is quoting here, in Romans 13:9. Matthew 19:18-19:

Jesus replied, “‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’”

This commandment refers to our relationship to our neighbors. Jesus completed His statement the same way Paul does, “Love your neighbors in the same way that you love yourself.” In other words, we love our neighbors spontaneously and unconditionally just as we naturally love ourselves.

The young man, not realizing what Jesus was really saying, said:

“All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I lack?”

Jesus tested him as to whether he really loved

his neighbor as himself. Matthew 19:21:

Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

Jesus, to prove to the young man that he did not, said, “Take your wealth, which means so much to you, and give it to the poor, your neighbors, then follow Me and I will give you My wealth.” This was a great bargain, but this young man had not accepted Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, so he did not consider this a bargain. He considered giving his wealth to the poor as a sacrifice which he was not willing to make. So, he left Jesus sorrowfully.

Jesus took this opportunity to show the disciples that it is impossible for man to love his neighbor in and of himself, the same way that he loves himself. Matthew 19:23-24:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the

truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

But Paul is advising Christians to love their neighbors in the same way as we love ourselves. The only way we can do this is to follow the counsel Paul gives in Romans 13:14:

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Only through the indwelling Spirit of Christ, which is His Representative, can we love our neighbors in the same way we spontaneously, unconditionally, and everlastingly love ourselves.

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul spells out the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit to every believer. This is the love of God, His character. 1 Corinthians 13:1-8:

...If I speak in the tongues of men and of

angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails....

Having said this, let us go to the distinction between the law as a method of salvation and the law as a standard of Christian living.

We will begin with an example. A pastor, in 1980, attended a World Council of Churches Conference, held only for pastors, in Nairobi, Kenya. The speaker was the famous John Stott. The attendees were about 1,500 from

approximately 83 denominations. John Stott gave us a series of studies from the book of Thessalonians. In the third study he said, “We evangelicals know how to preach the good news but we have failed to preach the good life. The reason for this is that we have done away with the law.” Then he added, “The law was never done away with as a standard of Christian living.”

The New Testament makes a distinction between the law as a method of salvation and the law as a standard of Christian living. In Romans 3:28, and in chapter 9, Paul makes it clear that God never gave the law as a method of salvation. This was the mistake of the Jews.

But, when Paul comes to Romans 13, he is now lifting up the law as a standard of Christian living. What is the difference?

Let us examine four major differences between the law as a method of salvation (works of the law) and the law as a standard of Christian living. Paul opposed the use of the law as a method of salvation

in Romans 13.

1. The first distinction is that, when we keep the law as a method, then we are using the law as a letter only. That is, the law comes to us in terms of “do this” or “do not do that.” The Jews made the law of God into rules. For example, in Matthew 23:23, Jesus speaks about these rules:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill, and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.

The Jews had 248 rules and 369 prohibitions in terms of the law. But, when we keep the law as a standard, motivated by faith that works, love becomes the fulfillment of the law. The gospel creates in us a deep gratitude for what God did to us in Jesus Christ. He redeemed us; He reconciled us so we now respond by a faith motivated by or that works by love. The Holy Spirit brings this

important ingredient of God's love into us. Then, the love of God constrains us and reproduces in us the character, the life, of Christ which is in harmony with the law.

In Galatians 5:22 onwards, Paul talks about the fruits of the Spirit which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and so on. Then he concludes by saying that against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

In other words, these fruits of the Spirit are the fulfillment of the law. The law does not condemn the fruits of the Spirit; they are in perfect harmony with its requirements. Therefore, law as a method is keeping the law in the letter: "do this" or "do not do that." Law in the spirit is keeping the law from the heart, motivated by love.

2. The second distinction is that when the law is kept as a method of salvation, it produces only external righteousness. Jesus made a statement in Matthew 15:8-9, quoting from the book of Isaiah:

“These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”

The Jews took the law, which is based on the love of God, and turned it into rules, regulations, and prohibitions. By keeping these rules, they thought they were keeping the law. But their law obedience, this keeping of the rules, was only an external righteousness. Their hearts were far away from God.

But, when we keep the law as a standard, the law first becomes a delight. It does not become a set of rules. Second, it becomes a delight in terms of an inward obedience. In other words, a person who keeps the law as a standard, controlled by the Holy Spirit, motivated by love, keeps the law from the heart.

A pastor gave a week of prayer at a Christian college which had very strict rules. He preached to the students for a whole week on the wonderful message of salvation by grace. One of the faculty said to him, “How do we, as an institution, practice righteousness by faith?” The pastor said to him, “First, you must make a distinction between the rules your college has set up and Christianity. Every college has rules, including government colleges. Let the students realize that these rules are those of the college. Do not link them with Christianity because, if you do, the students will look upon these rules as Christianity. But Christianity is not a set of rules. It is a relationship with God and our fellowmen. It is justification by faith. The fruit is holiness of living. Then give them Christ so they are converted men and women. Give them Christ in such a way that the love of Christ constrains them, so that they can say with Paul, “For me to live is Christ.”

During this week of prayer, the pastor ate with the students and he discovered two groups in the

college. About 90 percent of the students had come to this college with its strict rules because they wanted to be there. The other 10 percent came there because they were sent by their parents to be reformed. Those who came by their own free will did not need the rules. They were already converted Christians. They were already living a life in harmony with the rules of the college; therefore, they did not need the rules. But the 10 percent of them who were sent there by their parents, to them the college was, as one student said, “hell.” She said to the pastor, “Please do not tell my mother that this is a wonderful college.” He said, “Why not?” She said, “I do not want three more years of hell.” To her, being in this college was like being in a prison.

Righteousness by faith begins from the heart. God works from the inside outward. Legalism — that is, the law as a method — is only concerned about external performance.

3. The third distinction is that this external righteousness — which the law keepers produce

when they keep the law as a method of salvation — may look good to men but, to God, it is an abomination. In Isaiah 64:6, we are told that all our righteousness is, in God’s eyes, “filthy rags.”

Then, in Luke 16:15, we read what Jesus said to the Pharisees:

“You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.

God looks at our hearts; man looks at the external performance. This is the distinction.

When a Christian, saved by grace, controlled by the Spirit, motivated by love in his behavior, obeys the law, it is not a set of rules. It is not simply external righteousness; it is God, Christ, living in us by faith. Hebrews 8:10-13:

“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I

will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

Ezekiel 36:25-28:

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God.

The writer of Hebrews tells us the meaning of the New Covenant. In legalism, the law is written on tables of stone. In the gospel, the law is written in our hearts. God promises to write the law in our hearts. He promises to put the ingredient which is the basis of all law keeping, His love, in our hearts, so that we may have a relationship with our neighbors as God has with us, a love relationship.

4. Finally, the righteousness of the law, when it is used as a method of salvation, is a righteousness that glorifies man. Remember Jesus' parable about the Pharisee who prayed in the temple? Luke 18:10-14:

Two men went up the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get." But the tax collector stood at a distance. he would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a

sinner.” I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Man is only concerned about himself, how good he looks to others, but a Christian who is keeping the law as a standard considers himself a sinner and does not look down on others but is living a life of love towards others.

Paul is saying here in Romans 13:8 onwards that a true Christian looks at the law not as a method of salvation, since he has already been justified in Christ. He looks at the law as a standard of Christian living and allows the Holy Spirit to produce, in him, the obedience which reflects the love of God, the character of Jesus Christ.

In Romans 13:11, Paul makes the statement:

And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your

slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

Paul is saying that, even though we are saved in Christ, the consummation, the reality of our salvation, is future. It is important as we close the study of this passage that we realize the New Testament teaching about salvation. There are many Christians who claim that they are saved and who stop there. No, salvation in the New Testament is presented in all three tenses — the past, present, and future. A person who has been justified by faith, a person who has received the gospel by faith and has accepted Christ as his or her Messiah and Saviour, can confess, “I am saved.” A Christian is already saved in terms of the guilt and punishment of sin. But a Christian must not stop there. We must go on and say, “I am being saved,” in the continuous present tense. We are being saved from the power and slavery of sin. This is what God saves us daily from through the Holy Spirit as we put on the Lord, Jesus Christ.

And, finally, the Christian must also say, “I will

be saved” from the nature and the presence of sin. A Christian, therefore, is saved because he or she is justified by faith. We are being saved because sanctification is a daily process that goes on throughout our life spans. We can say, “I will be saved” in terms of glorification because, when Christ comes, this corruption will put on incorruption and this mortal will put on immortality. In Jesus Christ, we have salvation full and complete. It is not enough for us to say simply say, “I am saved.” The world needs to see that salvation in our daily lives is keeping the law as a standard, loving our neighbor in the same way that we love ourselves. When this happens, the world will realize that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

Let us not be Christians just in word but in action and we will look forward to the day when Christ will come and take us home.

Chapter 36

Dealing with the Weak

(Romans 14)

I have just come from one of the greatest events in the history of the Adventist Church. In fact, it was so important and the General Conference got so excited that they actually sent a reporter to observe and to write a report in the Review and Herald. What was this event?

For the first time in the history of the North American Division, the white pastors of the South Carolina Conference and the Black pastors of the South Atlantic Conference met together in a combined workers meeting. This may not mean anything to you because we don't have regional conferences in this part of the country. In the south, it is very different.

I took my field school in Charlotte in 1964, 25 years ago. In those days, black was black and

white was white and the twain never mixed. And they were fighting with each other like cats and dogs.

I remember one young man from Southern College [in those days called Southern Missionary College] said to me, “God never intended the blacks to ever be brought to the United States.”

I said, “Where did you get that from?” He could not give me a Bible answer.

And the Blacks kept saying, “We have an equal right to this country.”

I said to myself, “Whatever your argument, one thing is clear: this issue is a contradiction of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

But when I saw these two groups of pastors 25 years later meeting together, eating in the same cafeteria, living in the same cabins and fellowshipping as if there was no difference, I said to myself, “The gospel is still the power of God.” I

tell you, any distinctions in the church is a contradiction of the gospel. On the cross, Jesus abolished all enmity, all partition walls, all distinctions, all separation between a holy God and sinful man and between man and man. Wherever we have distinctions in the church, we are failing to reveal to the world the power of the gospel.

Unfortunately, this problem of relationships has always been a major problem in the history of the Christian Church. You only have to read 1 Corinthians 3:3-4 and you will discover that the church was divided over leadership. Some were for Apollos, some were for Paul, and Paul is rebuking them for this:

You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?

Sounds very familiar today, doesn't it? Some are for Ron Spear, some are for Wieland, some are

for Sequeira, some are for Gibson. That is a contradiction of the gospel. There is only one Lord in the church: Jesus Christ.

If you turn to the Epistle to the Galatians and read chapter five verse 15, Paul says,

If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

“You are biting and devouring one another.” Terrible! Then you turn to Ephesians and Colossians and Paul is reminding the Christians that there has to be unity in the Christian Church. Then go to Philippians 4:2-3 and you will find that there were two women who were at odds with each other, Euodia and Syntyche.

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of

life.

They were at odds with each other and Paul is saying, “No. This is not as it should be.”

Now, as we come to Romans 14, we discover likewise in the church of Rome we had divisions. Some thought in that church it was a sin to eat meat and so they ate only vegetables. Others thought that it is a sin not to observe the Old Testament feast days and they also insisted that everybody follow them. Now if each believer had kept his own personal convictions to himself, there would be no problem. But the trouble is they were insisting on their own ideas being pushed upon others. When that happens, you have division.

Now we must be absolutely clear that some activities we know are wrong. The Bible says so. And we know that some activities we must do because they are right and because the Bible says we must do them. But what Paul is discussing in chapter 14 in the last part of verse one are issues that in the New King James Version

says “over doubtful things.” If he was writing today, he would use the phrase that we normally use: “grey areas.” Romans 14:1:

Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.

I have a policy and I know some of you don't follow it. It's obvious. But I have a policy that in fundamentals we must be united but in nonfundamentals, these grey areas, we must have charity. It is impossible for sinful human beings like us to see eye to eye on everything. Even in the best of homes, even in the best of marriages, there is always sometimes some disagreement. If there isn't, then one partner is acting like a slave. But the moment each person acts as a human being, you will always have things upon which to disagree.

What Paul is doing is discussing how do we deal with relationships over these problems of the grey areas. Unfortunately we have similar problems today in the church, right here in this

church. In all the churches we have problems over theology, we have problems over reforms, diet or dress reform. That's why this chapter is extremely significant for us today.

With this in mind, let us look at the chapter. You can divide Romans 14 into two sections. In the first 12 verses, Paul is counselling the members at Rome. The counsel that comes through him is "receive one another." We will look at that in detail. The second counsel that Paul gives is found in verses 13 to 15 and that is that we need to edify one another. Receive one another and edify one another. Now let's take each of these sections.

The first section is receiving one another and he is using an example in the grey areas. I would like to say right at the outset that Paul is not discussing here the health message. That's not the issue. The health message never was an issue in New Testament times. What is the issue? He is dividing the church members into two camps: those who are weak in faith and those who are strong in faith. It is extremely interesting to see

how he defines the weak in faith, because we would tend to disagree with him. He says those who are very scrupulous about the details of Christian living are weak in faith. Those who have found their freedom in Christ are not those who are always going into guilt trips and condemning themselves and others. Look at verse two:

One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.

The King James Version says "eats only herbs." The modern translation says "only vegetables." The Greek word that Paul used is referring to things that are grown from the ground which would be vegetables in contrast to those who are eating by killing, which is animals and meat.

What was the real issue? There were two groups of Christians in the Roman Church. One group was those who were victims of Judaism, that is, they were converted from Judaism and came from a very strong legalistic background. The

other were mainly the Gentiles who came from a very Greek-minded people. The Greeks, Hellenists, believed that the body, that all matter is evil. When these people became Christians they said, “We must never pamper the body. We must deprive it of good food. We must live on vegetables.” Vegetables, especially in those days, meant food that was tasteless. There are a lot of Americans today who think that way. They think that the vegetarian diet is tasteless. That’s why we as Adventists have to prove to them that the vegetarian diet can be very tasty. They only need to come to one of our potlucks.

But the issue was not health reform, the issue was those who were scrupulous about what they ate were weak in faith and those who enjoyed their food without wondering whether or not it was offered to idols or not or whether it’s good or bad, they were considered strong. The issue here is we must not begin judging each other on this grey area. That’s the issue. Look at verse three:

The man who eats everything must not look

down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him.

We have as Christians no right to judge. Why not? Look at the last part of verse three:

...For God has accepted him.

Let's go back to the argument. There are two groups of Christians in the church: the weak in faith and the strong in faith. As far as God is concerned, both have been accepted by Him. And since God is Boss and He has accepted both, so should we. Look at his argument in verse four:

Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls, And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Who are you? When we went to the mission field, we were shocked to discover that there in the mission field in Africa we had two policy books: one for the nationals, they called it section one, and

one for the missionaries, section two. In this policy book, there was a different scale for wages, moving allowance, etc. It was always a bone of contention. I don't blame the nationals because, in the beginning, we gave the argument that we missionaries were educated. "You are savages so you don't need that much money." But what happened? When these Africans got educated and came back with Master's degrees and Doctoral degrees, we had to find another excuse. So the battle went on and on until finally we were forced to do away with the two-section books. It was a tragedy that we had to be forced to do it.

In that hot argument, one day the president of our union, who was a national, a Ugandan, stood up and he said, "I don't know what you are fighting about." They were fighting over the wage scale. Just like we fight here over women's ordination, they were fighting over wage scale there. The president, who was a fine, godly Christian man made a statement and I praise him for that statement. He said, "If somebody out there sent his shamba boy [which means his garden boy] to come

and dig my garden and plant vegetables for me, I am not going to ask that man, ‘How much are you paying your servant?’ I couldn’t care less how much he is paying him even though he may earn more than I. But the fact that he has sent his servant to work in my garden, all I can do is say thank you for such a kind action. This is what I do to the missionaries. I don’t pay them. The General Conference pays them. They bring their salaries with them, but I know one thing: they are working in my country and all I can say to them is, ‘Thank you for coming here.’ ”

Now here’s a man who understood the gospel. That doesn’t mean that it was right but he was not fighting for his rights. He realized that God has to solve this problem.

We will never agree on everything. Some believe that we should not even touch eggs. Some believe that we should not even touch cheese. Fine. But please don’t impose your views on others and say, “If you don’t do this, you are not a good Christian.” It is God who judges. Look at

verse five:

One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

If you look at the historical context, you will see that it is dealing primarily with the feast days. Some Christians would like to say that it includes the Sabbath but the fact is that even New Testament scholars who are Sunday-keepers say that they believe through the word of God that the Gentiles in the early Christian Church kept the Sabbath. These are Sunday-keeping scholars. The reason they give is that if the Gentiles were not keeping the Sabbath, the Judaizers would have kicked up a stink about it. But there is not a single ripple there of any opposition against the Gentiles for not keeping the Sabbath. There was an issue about feast days all along in the early church. So what Paul is saying is, “Some Christians believe that we must keep all feast days.”

In our own church, we have some people who say we must keep the jubilee. When it doesn't happen as it is supposed to, they fade into the distance without any apology for their error.

One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

Now remember the context. This is over grey areas. That's how he begins the chapter. Romans 14:6:

He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Now here is a fundamental truth: every Christian is bought or redeemed by the Lord. The church is defined in the New Testament as the body of Christ. Every human body has a head; that means he has a boss. Do you know who the head

of the church is? It isn't your pastor. It isn't the conference president. It is Jesus Christ. Paul is saying that everyone of us must live according to the way the Lord is directing us. By the way, He doesn't direct each of us the same way. He knows our background. He knows where we are coming from. He guides each of us differently. But we, as human beings, have no right to judge others. Verse seven:

For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.

In other words, what Paul is saying is:

Both the weak in faith and the strong in faith have been received and accepted by God, therefore, we should accept them too. That's in the first three verses.

In verses four to nine, Paul is saying, "Jesus is the only Lord in the church over all believers and we are to live under His guidance, under His direction.

Verse eight:

If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

Do you know that God has bought you, not with silver and gold but with His precious blood? I want to remind you of what we covered in the second half of chapter six of Romans, that to whomsoever you surrender yourselves as slaves to him you belong, either to sin, which is by nature, or to God who is the author of righteousness. Verse nine says:

For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

That is, He is the Lord of everyone who accepts Him, whether that one is dead or alive, because He will raise him up. Now verse ten:

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

If there was ever a time that this church needed this counsel, it is now. That is why, when you and I disagree on nonfundamentals, I will respect you for your position. Please respect me for my position. If you want to ask me for the reason why I take my position, I will be more than happy to give it. But to condemn me because I don't believe that there are two rooms in the heavenly sanctuary is a nonfundamental area. I believe there is a sanctuary in heaven. I believe there is a two-phased ministry of Christ in heaven. That is a fundamental teaching of this church. This denomination does not teach as a fundamental truth that there are two rooms because there are real problems with that position. I'll be happy to expose you to it one of these days.

But I do believe that the two rooms in the earthly sanctuary have a spiritual significance

which are fulfilled in the heavenly ministry of Christ. You may disagree, but please, I will respect you and you respect me. We do not fight over it. We don't condemn each other over it because that is what brings division into the church. Let each one be persuaded what is truth. I have to answer to God. I believe there is a judgment. I will have to stand there. Look at verses 10, 11, and 12. But each of us will have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Look at verse 11 where Paul quotes from the Old Testament:

It is written: “‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.’”

I don't have to answer to you but I do have to answer to God. I do have to answer to you in the sense that I have to give you a Bible reason why I believe what I believe. So then each of us shall give an account of himself to God. I'm perfectly aware of that and, therefore, I dare not say something that I don't believe in from the heart

because I know that one day I have to stand before God. And He will say to me, “What did you do with the texts that I gave you? What did you do with that text?”

And I will say, “God, when I studied that text, I went on my knees, I asked you for guidance, I used all the rules of interpretation, I took my Greek Bible and I studied it and I looked at the context and I did everything that You want me to do and I came to this conclusion. If I was wrong, why didn’t you correct me? You know my heart.”

You folks don’t know my heart and I don’t know your heart. But we have to be honest with what we believe. We must never take a position because we want to win a debate. That’s not the purpose of Bible study. We have to believe from the word of God, honestly following the rules of interpretation to find out what to believe. And we must be able to give an answer. Verse 12:

So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Verse 13:

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

This brings us to the second area of the chapter and that is: edify one another. Look at verse 14:

As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced [not by human beings but by the Lord] that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean.

This statement was a tough one because when I look at the word "unclean," I discover that it is the same Greek word as is found in Acts 10:14 where Peter had to face the unclean animals. It is the same word.

But if anyone regards something as unclean,

then for him it is unclean.

Now if you take this statement as a blanket statement, you will go the wrong way. You need to keep in mind what the context is in which you read this text. There were many Christians in Paul's day who were saying that food that was offered to idols was unclean. So the issue here is not clean and unclean meats. That is not the issue. The issue here is that some people were saying that some foods were clean and some were saying that it was unclean. There were factions. Verse 15:

If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.

Every one of us as Christians, whatever we may do, always affects our fellow Christians. Whatever you eat or drink, do it in relationship to God. Whatever you do, whatever you say, whatever your behaviour may be does affect your fellow believers. Paul is advising us here that we

must do nothing that will bring stumbling to our brother, nothing that will grieve our brother, and nothing that will cause our brother to give up his faith.

One day I had a seminar in the highlands of Ethiopia. It does get cold there in the highlands. This was a town that was 9,000 feet above sea level and, believe me, it gets pretty cold. Even with a fire, warm clothes are necessary in such heights on the equator.

I arrived on Friday just before sunset and, by the time I pitched my tent in the bush, it was sunset. There was to be a meeting an hour later. There was a cold wind blowing and the church was made of poles with a grass roof. No heat in that church. The wind was passing through and everybody who was there was shivering. They were huddled up together trying to gain some warmth.

Before the service began, I said to the pastor, “Why don’t we make some hot drink and give the

people something before the service? That would help to put some heat into us.”

He was horrified. “Pastor, do you realize what you said?”

I said, “Yes, I realize. What’s the problem?”

“If we make a fire and make a hot drink, that is sin,” he replied.

I realized immediately that these people did not believe in kindling a fire on the Sabbath day, even for a hot drink. In fact, the pastor told me that all they did was done on Friday and they ate the food cold. If you know African food, it is not meant to be eaten cold. It has to be eaten hot, otherwise it is tough. But they ate it cold on Sabbath. And they did not eat it with joy. They forced it down because they had to keep alive.

I had in my little bag a little gas fire. All I had to do was turn the knob and have a fire and I would have a hot drink, not for the whole church but for

myself. But I realized immediately that there would be problems with that.

You see, when you pitch a tent, you have no privacy. It is not America. They come to the windows to see you getting undressed. What's this foreigner like? What does he sleep in? They have never seen a sleeping bag. They have never seen an air mattress. They look and they talk and they say, "What wonderful things these people have."

I knew if I made a hot drink for myself I would have no problem between me and God. No problem. But I knew that there would be a problem between me and them. So, for their sake, I said, "No, I will shiver with them."

We spent a whole week on the gospel and they found liberty in Christ. Guess what? The next Friday we had hot drinks before the service. The Sabbath was no longer a burden.

But we have problems because we keep judging each other. Every country has its own

rules on how to keep the Sabbath. Go to Bacchiocchi's country, Italy. They play football on the Sabbath. Go to Scandinavia and they go swimming on the Sabbath. Of course, if you go to England, they drink tea on the Sabbath, besides other days. Then come to America and they take long rides for pleasure on the Sabbath. Each country has their rules and they stick by those rules. The problem is when you send missionaries to Africa from these countries.

As one Ethiopian said to me, "I never learned how to swim until I learned it from a missionary."

I knew immediately that missionary came from Scandinavia. I said to him, "Make sure that missionary is your advocate in heaven."

What Paul is saying here is, "We must do nothing that will stumble or grieve or offend or lead somebody astray."

Do you remember when Paul took Timothy to a synagogue one day? The people said, "We will not

listen to you.”

“Why?” he asked.

“You are bringing Timothy who’s half a Jew and who is not circumcised.”

He said, “No problem. Bring me a knife.” He had him circumcised and then said, “Now are you willing to listen to me?”

They said, “yes.”

Paul was against circumcision as a means of salvation but when it was putting up a barrier he said, “I’ll circumcise you.”

Timothy said, “Okay. If I have to go through this agony for their sake, I’ll do it.”

My dear people, that is what Paul is saying.

The next thing he is saying in verses 16 to 18 in chapter 14 is that Christians must have priorities:

Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

We are experts in “majoring in minors.” At this workers meeting, the black brethren were having a hot discussion. I had a hard time when I preached there. Only two of us were speaking. One was a black minister from the General Conference and the other one was myself.

Have you ever preached in a black church? I’ll tell you, it really turns you on or it makes it difficult. They don’t keep quiet. “Preach on, brother. Give it to us.” It wouldn’t be bad hearing that once in a while in a white church.

The meetings were long. I preached for two hours at a time and they just gave me the encouragement but I didn’t need it. Then they had

devotionals in the morning. They had a white pastor first morning. They had a black pastor the next morning. There was a world of difference. The black pastor spoke so loudly that it was like thunder in my ears. The white one said, “Boy, I’m having noise pollution coming out.”

I said, “Yes, we all come from different cultures.” The blacks love this dynamic preaching. They respond in the church. The whites are very conservative. Here at home, I have a hard time finding people to pray in prayer meetings. I would have no problem in the black churches. They would all pray, maybe all at the same time. They are very outgoing. We have differences but no one is allowed to condemn the others. The whites have no right to say, “You blacks do not speak correctly because you are so boisterous.” The blacks have no right to say to the whites, “You are dead in church.” Let each one be perfect. We need to remember, we need to put our priorities first. We need to refrain from majoring in minors.

I spoke of the black workers arguing among

themselves, and they finally called me to solve their problem. They asked, “Will there be babies in the New Earth? Will babies be born in the New Earth?” Can you imagine them majoring in such a minor?

I said to them, “You mean to tell me that you spent an hour so far on this issue when there is such wonderful truth in the Scripture about Christ that we should know first? Why don’t you wait until you go to the New Earth and settle this problem there? It’s not important now whether there are babies born in the New Earth or not. But we will argue, we will fight over things that are insignificant when we should be lifting up Christ. Please turn to 1 Corinthians 8:8. It’s the same issue:

But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

Have you got it? The fact that you are following meticulously the health reform message does not make you a better Christian. You follow

it because you want to live for Christ, not to have a few stars in your crown. But food does not commend us to God for neither if we eat are we the better nor if we do not eat are we the worse. Please remember that our standing before God has to do with our position in Christ, not in our performance. Our performance has to do because we are living for Him and if He says to me, “I want you to have this diet,” I would say, “Yes, Lord. I’ll do it because I love you. You have redeemed me and I belong to you.”

One year I worked for a summer in the logging part of Sweden. I was a student at Newbold College [in the U.K.] and I went selling books 150 miles north of the Arctic Circle. The natives of that area were called Laps. I’m convinced that they are definitely connected with the Eskimos of Alaska because they have the same features with high cheek bones and they have the same culture and patterns of life. But there’s one problem there: it is too cold to grow vegetables even in the summer. We had a snow storm when I was there on the twenty-third of June. It was a snow storm.

The ground below a certain level is permanently frozen. You can't even grow fruit trees. No vegetables there. The diet is fish, reindeer meat, and milk. If you went as a missionary and said to them, "I will not touch your food even though it kills me," I'll tell you, this is not practising health reform. The purpose of health reform is not to kill you.

I had one missionary say that: "I will not touch it even if it kills me."

I said, "It will kill you. Because you do need nourishment." By the way, you wouldn't go to heaven because it killed you. You may stay there forever because we are not saved by what we do. This is what Paul is saying. Let's go back to Romans 14 and read verses 19 and 20 and onward:

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is

better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

We must not bring factions into the church because we have disagreement in this grey area. The issue is not whether it is right or wrong. The issue is: “Are you following the counsel of God between you and Him?”

Yet I am concerned. I am burdened that we solve this problem. We had a workers meeting in Ethiopia one day. There were about 50 pastors with three speakers. There was a General Conference [Adventist World Headquarters] man, Paul Gordon; there was a division man; and myself — three speakers.

Ethiopians don't have much money. The average family in Africa has meat about five times a year. Even then, it's a scrawny old chicken for a family of 10 or 15. All each one gets is a small piece.

This meeting we had was in a small town where we had a very rich business Adventist man. Out of love for us he had a banquet in the middle of this workers meeting. Guess what he did? He had the fattest calf. This was a polite way of saying, "I welcome you in Ethiopia." It is almost unethical to have a banquet without killing the fatted calf. The pastors were really enjoying themselves.

My boss, the division man, was furious. In fact, he was so furious that he could hardly enjoy his own cabbages and potatoes.

"What's bothering you?" I asked.

He said, "Can't you see what they are eating?"

I said, “Look, brother, when you came here the G.C. gave you a freight allowance. You brought in Loma Linda Foods. You brought Linkettes and all this plastic food so that you may have a variety in your diet. How much of this have you shared with them? You know very well what they eat day in and day out. In fact, one of the biggest problems in Africa is a protein deficiency. Why are you grudging them a little meat, man? Why are you making it such a big issue?”

Well, he wouldn't listen to this bush preacher so when the afternoon meeting came he stood up and said, “Not one of you will make it to heaven.” Even the G.C. man was horrified at that statement.

Now, Ethiopians are a very polite people but there was one African pastor who could not take it. He stood up and said, “Brother, how come Jesus went to heaven? He did eat meat, you know.” To make matters worse, the other pastors clapped their hands.

And I said, “They've got you.” Now I agree

that it was the wrong attitude, but they got him.

This man did not come down. It was like adding fuel to the fire. He became so hot that I had to stand up and say, “Look, I don’t care what you two are saying but one fact is true: I am in charge of this part of the vineyard.” So I said to my boss, “You keep quiet and let me speak.”

I said to the pastor who spoke, “Let’s be absolutely honest. You did not eat that meat because Christ ate it. You ate it because it was tasty.”

And he said, “Yes.”

I turned to my boss and said, “You did not give up meat because you wanted to serve God. You gave up meat so that you could go to heaven. That’s how you are coming across. What is the difference? He’s serving self and you’re serving self. You are both in the same camp. You’re doing opposite things.”

He had no right to condemn the African pastors. If he was in their shoes, how many missionaries from this country are willing to go to Africa, live in their homes and live like them and eat their food? The Peace Corps will do it but how many missionaries do it? Then we have a right to condemn them? You try eating like they do. They're struggling for survival. Why do we begrudge them? What is Paul saying here? There are two principles that I want to mention:

1. Whatever your lifestyle and whatever you do, you must do it because of a faith relationship with your God. If I practice the health message, it is not because I want to live seven years longer. I may have to die tomorrow as a martyr, some of you may even want to shoot me. If I practice the health message, it's because this body is a machine and I want God to use it to His glory. It does save me hospital bills in this country but that's not the reason that I'm doing it. Whatever we do it for has to be based on a faith relationship to God, and our

faith is based on knowledge, not on what you tell me or on what you do or don't do.

2. We must do nothing — even though in our minds it's okay — we must do nothing that will cause a fellow believer to either stumble or be grieved or to take the wrong direction and be destroyed.

These are the two principles. In closing, I would like to read a verse that will put it together. 1 Corinthians 10:31-33 and the first part of chapter 11:1:

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the church of God — even as I try to please everybody in every way. . For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

We belong to God. We must live for Him.

Don't do anything because of your rights. Please remember that the church of God, your fellow believers are important. We must live in love. We must do nothing that will in any way hinder the spiritual growth of our fellow believers. Then he closes with these words:

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

May we all imitate Christ who went about doing good and never condemned the publicans and sinners but accepted them and said, "Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Gradually, He began to change them outwardly. May God help this church that we will be united in love. We may not see eye to eye in these grey areas but we will be united in love because we all belong to Christ and have been accepted by Him and, therefore, we are all in the same boat. We're one hundred percent sinners. I don't care who you are, we're one hundred percent sinners saved by grace. May God bless you.

Chapter 37

Bearing One Another's Burdens

(Romans 15)

We are coming to the end of the book of Romans. I will never get tired of preaching from this book. Luther called it “The clearest gospel of all.” And E.J. Waggoner said, “This book can never be separated from the Three Angels’ Messages.”

The first seven verses of chapter 15, unfortunately, do not belong to chapter 15. They should belong to chapter 14 because it’s dealing with relationships. Remember, chapter 14 dealt with relationships and we saw that in the first 13 verses of chapter 14 that Paul was admonishing the believers that we need to receive one another. Why should we receive one another? Because Christ has received us. And if Christ has received

us, who are we to question? That's the first half of chapter 14. The second half of chapter 14 is that we need to edify one another. Now, in chapter 15, in verse one Paul says:

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.

In Romans 14:1, he spoke about two groups of people: the weak in faith, in contrast to the strong in faith. Here in chapter 15, it is not the same two groups but he is dealing with the mature Christian in contrast to the babe in Christ.

You see, when a person accepts Christ, it doesn't matter how old he or she is, but the moment that we accept Christ we are babes, spiritually, in Christ. Like human babies, we have to learn to walk. The trouble is that some of the mature Christians tend to look down upon the babes in Christ. "I don't see why they are having so many difficulties. I can do it." But let me remind you that when you were a baby, you did not learn to walk straight away. You fell many times.

If you didn't, boy, you were a genius. But you see, a babe in Christ will fall many times.

What should be the attitude of a mature Christian towards a baby in Christ? The answer is in verse two:

Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.

When a baby falls, what do the parents do? Do they kick it? Do they yell, "You get up"? No. They go down and lift the baby and help the baby. And that's exactly what Paul is saying. To do that, we need an ingredient which we don't have naturally. The Bible calls it agape. When we have this gift, which comes from God, we will be able to practice what Paul is teaching here.

Before Jesus left this world, He made a statement to His disciples. You'll find it in John 13:34-35. He said:

A new command I give you: Love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

“I want you disciples to love one another just as I loved you.” At that time, when Jesus spoke these words, they were not loving each other. They were fighting against each other. They were fighting as to who will be the greatest. Jesus said, “That is not the kingdom of God. You must love one another just as I love you.”

But that kind of love doesn't come automatically, so I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians 13. There Paul describes that love as the greatest gift. Now we must get the context, because He's talking in terms of spiritual gifts. The greatest gift, we all know, is Jesus Christ. But, in the context of spiritual gifts, the greatest gift is agape. Notice what happens when that gift is manifested in the church. Note 1 Corinthians 13:4-6:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy,

it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

If you have love, you will not “delight in evil,” or “rejoice in iniquity” [as some translations read], which is of course sin. Why not? Not because sins condemn you, but because something took place on the cross. I want to remind you what took place on the cross. If you read Isaiah 53, which is the chapter on the cross, there we read (verse 6):

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

We must hate iniquity because of what it did to our Lord Jesus Christ. Every time you sin, it is like putting a knife into Him. That’s how the Old Testament taught what sin is in a Christian experience.

We do not rejoice in iniquity, but we rejoice in the truth. And what is the truth? That's the question Pilate asked, "What is truth?" [John 18:38]. And Jesus said, "I am the truth" [John 14:6, 18:37]. So a Christian who rejoices in Christ will hate sin. A Christian who has love in his heart will "suffer long, not be envious, not puff himself up, not be rude, not seek his own."

That is exactly what Paul is admonishing. Going back to chapter 15 of Romans, I want you to look at verse three. I want now to bring out a very important point. Here, Paul is using Christ not as a Saviour but as an example. The New Testament presents Christ in two ways: as a Saviour and as an example. What comes first? Did Christ come to this world primarily to be our example or did He come primarily to be our Saviour? That needs to be emphasized because there are many who tend to emphasize Christ as an example.

Yes, He is our example but **FIRST** He's our Saviour. He first redeems us, He first gives us peace, He first gives us justification. That's what

Paul has been dealing with in the first half of Romans. Now he's saying, "Having accepted Christ as your Saviour, having accepted Christ as your life, I want to present Him as your example." Romans 15:3:

For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: "The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me."

Paul is quoting from Psalms 69:9, one of the Messianic prophecies. What is this text saying? All the blame, not only the sins, but all the blame that is heaped upon God, Jesus took. All the blame that was heaped upon the human race, Jesus took. I want you to notice what Paul is doing here. He is using Christ as an example. How is it possible that Christ could take our reproaches and the reproaches that are on God?

We face the same problem today. There are many people today who are cursing God, blaming God for all the terrible things that are happening in this world. Of course, we are sinners, too, and

some of us are blaming God. “I can’t help it; God made me this way.” But the big issue is that Jesus was willing to take blame for something that He had not done. That’s the issue I want to bring to your attention. It’s one thing to accept the blame for something you have done but it’s another thing to accept the blame for something you have not done.

Paul is saying, “I want you to take the blame of the mistakes done by those baby Christians. I want you to take the blame of those who have done something wrong.” We are experts at pointing out the things that others have done that is wrong. But to take the blame of somebody else, we cannot do it naturally. It takes the grace of God.

I would like to lay some very important rules. First of all, we must remember that, if we are to take the blame of each other, we must stop looking at ourselves as individuals. That’s a humanistic approach. We must look at ourselves in the context of corporate identity. What do I mean by that? I’ll give you an illustration.

We arrived in Ethiopia in 1973. When we arrived, there was a real problem. It was not between members and members; it was even worse. The problem was between workers and workers. The national workers of Ethiopia for this denomination and the missionaries for this denomination were at loggerheads. It was a real crisis. So much so that the division had to step in. The union president called me to his office.

“Well, Jack,” he said, “you have an advantage.”

I asked, “What’s my advantage?”

“You were born in Africa,” he said. “You can consider yourself to some extent as a national. But you also are a missionary. You are both, and here we have these two groups fighting like cats and dogs. Also, you are new to Ethiopia, so why don’t you please try to solve this problem? We have tried desperately.”

“Well,” I said, “I’ll do my best, but I want you

to know that all those three advantages that you have pointed out to me are of no value because it will take the grace of God to solve the problem.” Just like it would take the grace of God to solve the problem of South Africa. It took the grace of God to bring the pastors of the black churches in South Carolina and the white churches together. It took the grace of God. You cannot do it by promotional programs.

He said, “You try whatever method, as long as we can solve this problem, because it is destroying our work in Ethiopia.” The communists had not come in there yet. It was a year later that the Marxist revolution took place.

The first thing I did was to bring the two groups together. Now here was the problem. Two cultures think differently. The Africans have a solidarity concept of society. They came up with 30 grievances. Some of them were very insignificant from our point of view. One missionary called an African a donkey. That was an insult. We had a missionary who would come

and visit us and she always called our son, when he was a little baby, “How are you doing, little monkey.” The Africans thought that was an insult but the Americans didn’t think of it as an insult. It was just a term that we use for little kids because sometimes they are mischievous. So they came up with 30 grievances. Some of them were tough ones and some genuine and some misunderstandings.

I looked at the grievances and I noticed part of the problem. All these grievances were done by the previous missionaries, most of whom came from Europe. So the American missionaries were saying, “Why are you accusing us of something we never did?”

And the Africans said, “Yes, you did it.”

But the Americans said, “We weren’t here when these things took place.”

“But aren’t you missionaries?” They put all

missionaries into one basket because they thought in terms of solidarity.

So the American missionaries said, “No, why should we repent for something we have never done?” And, of course, they began finding fault with the nationals and they were pointing their fingers.

I said, “The issue is not who is right and who is wrong.” I asked a question of both the groups. “Tell me,” I said, “How many of you have seen a human being whose legs are American and whose hands are Ethiopian?”

“Impossible,” they said.

“Why not?” I said. “Why is it impossible?”

“Because it is impossible to have legs that are American and hands that are Ethiopian. You are either all American or all Ethiopian.”

I said, “Let us go to the Bible.” So I took them

to 1 Corinthians 12. I took them to Ephesians, Galatians, and then I said, “Look, the Bible is clear that, when you become a Christian, you are baptized into the body of Christ. There is no Ethiopian, there is no American, there is no Jew, no Greek, no male, no female. We are all one in Christ. Therefore, your behavior is a contradiction of the gospel and you are supposed to be workers. What are you preaching to your churches?”

I gave them a second illustration. Ethiopia follows the Bible methods. Christianity came into Ethiopia by the Third Century A.D., so they follow a lot of the laws of the Old Testament. One of the laws that they practice in Ethiopia is, if you are caught stealing, the punishment is forty strokes but one. Here’s the problem. Stealing is done by your hand. The forty strokes are given on your sitting department.

I said to them, “Why should the sitting department suffer for the mistake of the hand?”

“Because it is one body,” they said.

“Very good,” I said. “Therefore, you missionaries, the mistakes of your predecessors are your mistakes. The mistakes of the nationals are your mistakes because you are one body.”

And I said to the nationals, “If you have seen mistakes in the missionaries, you need to identify yourselves with those mistakes.”

Have you ever read Daniel’s prayer in Daniel nine, the prophet of God? He does not say, “The church has gone wrong.” What did he say? “We have gone wrong. We have sinned.” He identifies himself with the church. Are you willing to identify yourself with the mistakes of your fellow believers? If you are going to use Christ as an example, the answer is yes. If you are going to behave like a human being, the answer is no. But the question is, “What are you, a Christian first or an American first?” That’s the question that you need to ask yourselves.

But I know one thing and that is that if Christ

took my reproaches, then He wants me to do the same. He wants me to identify myself with the mistakes of my members. And you must be willing to identify yourself with my mistakes. Are you willing to do that? That is what Paul is saying. Then in verse four, having quoted Psalms 69:9, he says:

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

In other words, “I am not teaching you anything new.” The words “written in the past” means the Old Testament. All the things that were written in the Bible were written for our learning...

...so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

In other words, the Bible and the Bible only must be the guide line, the standard, the direction

for us.

This brings me to two important points. Let us turn to 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

“All scripture” to us would mean both Old and New Testament. When Paul wrote this, he was referring to all of the Old Testament. The New Testament had not been canonized at that time.

This brings me to the second problem. In the days of the Bible, the majority of the members could not read and write. Therefore, the only way the scriptures could be explained and expounded and studied to the people was through the preaching of the Word. Well, the church multiplied through the preaching of the apostles. It grew in size and then problems came. The apostles began to get involved in the problems because they

had a burden for the people. They began looking after tables. They became involved in all of the administrations of the church and the ministry of the Word suffered. The apostles realized that and they immediately decided to do something about it.

So in Acts 6:2-4 we are told that they called the church together and said, “Look, it is not right for us to serve tables and leave the ministry of the Word. Therefore, here is a solution. I want you members to choose seven men of honest and good report and let them deal with these needs. We will take care of the ministry of the Word and pray.” And the church developed strongly that way.

One morning, the Sabbath School superintendent came to me and said, “We need to do something about the early teens. Here we have a church full. Is there anybody who is willing to say, ‘I want to sacrifice for the sake of our kids’?” We need desperately such people.

I’ll tell you what the problem is today. It is the same problem that the apostles faced. Do you

know why the South Carolina Conference called me? They gave me the topic; I did not choose the topic. They said, “We want you to teach our pastors how to preach Biblically because our members are starving.” Now the situation is different here. Today most people, the majority of people, can read and write. The trouble is that they don’t make the time or take the time to study this book. And whatever they do do is very superficial and the result is that preaching is still the most important part of feeding the flock.

Please don’t ask me to stand here and give you do’s and don’ts. My job is expounding scripture to you because I know one thing: it is the Word of God that is the power in the life of a Christian. You have to take it. You have to absorb it. You have to apply it, not to somebody else but to yourself. We need to spend time with the Word of God. Paul says here that this is where we get comfort. This is where we get power. This is where we get direction. So in verses five and six he goes on to say:

May the God who give endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Once the word of God has gripped you, you need to learn to accept each other, just like Christ has accepted us.” Then this section comes to an end in verse seven:

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

How did Christ receive us? Turn to Luke 15:1:

Now the tax collectors [this is the Internal Revenue Service people, whom nobody likes] and “sinners” [whom everybody despises] were all gathering around to hear him.

Here are the tax collectors and the sinners — the rejects — come to hear Him. Now listen to the religious leaders of Christ’s day. Luke 15:2:

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

How terrible! But Paul is saying, “We must be like-minded.”

I want to share something with you that has really touched me. Some time ago I received two letters, rather one letter and one note. The letter was from a man in the penitentiary who is there for committing murder. I’ve been studying Romans with them, too. He said, “Pastor, thank you for opening my eyes. There is hope for me. I’m going to enjoy this Christmas and I’m hoping that God will overrule and that I will come out and I will visit your church, I will come to your church.”

My question is, “Will you accept him, an ex-convict, a man who is accused and sentenced for murdering somebody? Will you accept him?”

The other incident took place the same week. I

was asked to teach a class in a college on “The Sermon on the Mount.” When I first went there, there was a young man. If I were to judge him by the outward appearance, he would belong not only to purgatory but to hell. This is not a woman. This is a man. He had an earring on and his hairstyle was very much that of a punk. But at the end of the exam he wrote a note: “Thank you, pastor, for bringing me back to Christ.”

What would have happened if I had said to him, “Look, brother, do you not know that the policy, the rule of this college, is that you can’t wear earrings?” Where would that have led him to? I received him because we both are sinners, saved by grace. I thank God that he has found Christ. “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you.” When we have that attitude, many of the backsliders will come back. Many.

I think of one more experience. One day a little boy came into my office. I was the ministerial secretary of the Ethiopian Union. He came into my office and said to me, “There is a young man out

there who would like to see you.”

“Sure,” I said, “Bring him in.”

“He won’t come in here,” he said.

“Why not?” I asked.

“Well, he did not tell me why not.”

I said, “Please plead with him.”

So he went and the boy wrote me a little note: “I cannot come. I’ll explain why. Please come and meet me here.”

So I went. He was the accountant for our hospital. He was desperate and he stole some money and was caught. The pastor of that church told him, “I don’t want you ever to step in this compound.” That’s what the pastor told him.

He wanted to come back to Christ. He left the church and went into the world and realized, like

the prodigal son, that the world was out to get him and not to help him. He wanted to come back but he could not step in because the pastor told him not to.

So I put my arms around him and said, “You walk with me. If the pastor touches you, he will have to touch me and I’m his boss.” That man wanted to come in but there was no one to welcome him. Just like the scribes and Pharisees.

Paul is saying, “Please let us receive one another just as Christ also received us.” Now please remember that Jesus did not condone sin. He told Mary, “I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more.” Now I don’t know that she followed Him, she wanted to, but I’m told He had to cast out the devil six more times. But I’ll tell you, we need to welcome our people. Look at Romans 15:8-9; it comes up with a new section:

For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles

may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.”

Now you may not realize what Paul is saying here because he is dealing with a faction that existed in his day and not in ours. It is the faction between Jews and Gentiles. God had given a promise to the fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are the fathers not of the Jews only, as the Jews thought, but they are the fathers of all who believe, all who are born again, and all who endure to the end. Anyway, God made promises to them and the promise was of the Messiah. The Jews felt that salvation belonged only to them because the Messiah had to be a Jew. That’s what is meant in this verse by “the Jews” or, in some translations, “the circumcision.” Christ came to be a human being as a Jew to save who? Only the Jews? No. The whole human race. And that’s why the Gentiles should glorify Him for His mercy.

He then gives us a string of quotations from the Old Testament in which he gives us a progression

of promises that we should apply. Let's go quickly through this progression.

1. The second part of verse nine, which is a quotation:

“Therefore I [that is, a Jew] will praise you [God] among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.”

In other words, the gospel was to come to the human race through the Jews. Salvation is from the Jews because Christ was a Jew. What were the Jews supposed to do with this gospel? They were to take it to the Gentiles. They were to declare the name of Jehovah to the Gentiles in Jesus Christ. Well, Paul did that. But many Jews did not. Peter did not want to do it in the beginning but he realized that he had to do it because God convinced him that they were saved also.

2. Verse 10: The Gentiles should rejoice with the Jews in this promise which they had received from them:

Again, it says, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”

“His people” refers to the Jews. How should the Gentiles respond to this good news? They should rejoice. With whom? The Jews. Not fight with them but rejoice with them. Not put them in the gas chamber, but rejoice.

3. Verse 11:

And again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples.”

Jews and Gentiles should offer praises together for the Saviour. No more fighting. No more back-biting, no more slanderous remarks, no more accusing each other, no more despising each other. Together we praise God.

4. In verse 12:

And again, Isaiah says, “The Root of Jesse [that

is, one will come up from the Jews since Jesse was the father of David] will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.”

In other words, God uses the Jews to bring redemption to the Gentiles and the Gentiles, in turn, must rejoice with the Jews and they both must accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Verse 13:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

He came to bring hope. He came to bring joy. He came to bring peace. Do you have it? Are you rejoicing in Christ or are you still fighting among yourselves?

Then, in verse 14 to the end, Paul talks about his plan and his ministry. There are some very important lessons in this section. Verses 14-16 tells that Paul is ministering to the Gentiles:

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another. I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

His ministry was not something he ordained himself but he was called by grace to be an apostle to the Gentiles. The last part of verse 15 says “because of the grace given to me by God.” “I have come to you because God has sent me to you.”

Why has God sent me to you? Verses 17-19:

Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have

said and done — by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

Verses 20 to 24:

It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation. Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand." This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you. But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.

According to God's plan. Do you know that God's plan is that all people should be saved? Not just the elect.

Then in verses 25 to 28, the Gentiles, in turn, minister to the Jews in appreciation. Look at verses 25-27:

Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.

The Gentiles were so appreciative of the gospel that they said, "No longer do we look at Jews as our enemies. We want to help them. They are suffering in Jerusalem. Here's some money; take it to them." And Paul said in verses 28-29:

So after I have completed this task and have made sure that they have received this fruit, I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full

measure of the blessing of Christ.

“But I know that when I am come to you — when I finish my job, when I bring this help to the Jews in Jerusalem — when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. I am not wanting to come to Rome because I am a tourist.” Rome was a very attractive city and many people, even today, go to Rome as tourists. But Paul did not want to come to Rome as a tourist. Do you know why he did not come before that? Because he was laboring in Asia Minor.

And now he concludes in verse 30:

I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.

Please, let us not fight. Let us not have division. Let us together pray for each other.
Verse 31:

Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea....

The Judaizers who were self-righteous people who thought they were right and Paul was wrong. “Please deliver me from them.” Unfortunately, God did not answer this prayer in the affirmative. The Judaizers did get him in Jerusalem. He did go to Rome, no longer as a missionary nor as an apostle but as a prisoner. But he prayed, verses 31-32:

Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, so that by God’s will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.

Jews, please don’t be so proud as to say, “We don’t want this help from the Gentiles here at all.” And now he concludes, verse 33:

The God of peace be with you all. Amen.

May God bless us.

Chapter 38

One in Christ

(Romans 16)

It was Paul's purpose in the closing of his letter to the Roman Church that he might impart to them some spiritual gift or truth that they might be established in Christ. You will notice that he gives a benediction at the end of this letter. In Romans 16:25, Paul repeats the same concern. He says:

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,....

We have spent 38 studies on this book now. That may seem a long time to some of you. The famous preacher Martin Lloyd Jones spent five years preaching on the book of Romans every Sunday. My purpose in spending so long on this book is twofold. Firstly, I want you to be

established in Christ. I want your faith to become so strong that nothing can shake you. And there is nothing like the book of Romans to do that, if you really understand the book. But there is another reason that I covered this book, and that is, I am hoping that a clearer understanding of the gospel, a clearer understanding of Christ Our Righteousness will so excite you that you will want to share this wonderful truth, this everlasting gospel, with others. It is my prayer that both these objectives will be reached: that you will be rejoicing in Christ on the one hand and that you will be witnessing about Him on the other.

Our study today is Romans 16, the last chapter of this book. I don't know how many of you have read this chapter, but those of you who have read it may turn around to me and say, "Is there anything we can learn from this chapter? After all, it's full of greetings." Well, nothing has been recorded in Scripture simply to fill space. There is a purpose. What I would like to do is to look at the whole chapter as a unit and then turn to one specific area which I believe is significant in this chapter.

We can divide this chapter into four parts. The first part is verses 1-16, where Paul greets 26 people by name and then two others for whom he mentions no name but he greets them. Now what does this tell us? What does this big section of Romans 16, 16 verses tell us? It tells me something that really makes me rejoice. It tells me that wherever Paul went and preached the gospel, there were loyal supporters. There were men and women who were saying good-bye to Paul and some of these were willing to die with Paul. I thank God for men and women who stand by the truth. But, unfortunately, not everyone stood by Paul. For when I go to the next section, verses 17 to 20, I notice that Paul is warning the believers in Rome to be careful. Let's read it. Romans 16:17:

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.

He's talking here about false teachers, men and

women who were dogging his steps and who were always trying to split the church over theological issues. Then, in verse 18, he says:

For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites [that is, their own interests]. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

In other words, Paul is saying that, “I thank God that you have obeyed the gospel.” Romans 16:19-20:

Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

Unfortunately, the problem hasn't stopped with Paul. We still have people today who like to divide the church, who would like to split the church over theological issues. Please notice what Paul says:

“It is a contradiction of the gospel.” I will have to say more about this as we go along. Paul says that these people are contrary to Christ because Christ’s greatest concern for the church is that we are united.

Let us turn to one of the last prayers that Jesus ever prayed publicly, in John 17. He has come now to the end of His earthly mission and He unburdens Himself to His Father. In verses 20 to 22 I read these words, recorded for our benefit. This is Christ praying to the Father concerning all believers. John 17:20-22:

My prayer is not for them alone [that is, for the disciples]. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message [and that includes you and me], that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one....

As long as we have division, we are not

witnessing the truth. God wants us to be one. That is one of the greatest evidences of the gospel. John 17:22-23:

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

The word “glory” refers to God’s self-emptying agape love. The love of God must unite us, folks, and this unity must be the witnessing of the gospel.

Let’s go back to Romans. After warning them about these false teachers, which in Paul’s days were the Judaizers, he turns to greeting the Roman Christians from his fellow workers. That’s verses 21 to 24. He talks about Timothy, “my fellow worker,” and other men. Tertius, in verse 22, was the secretary who wrote this epistle. Paul dictated his letters. The only part of the book of Romans that he actually wrote with his own hand was the benediction. The rest was dictated to Tertius, so he

is the one who wrote the letter, but it was Paul's words that he wrote.

So we have these nine faithful co-laborers with Paul. So, on one hand, we had supporters who supported Paul and, on the other hand, we had co-laborers. This work will not be finished until the lay members join hands with the ministers to preach the gospel. It is my prayer that we will no longer be seat warmers but we will go out and witness the gospel to our neighbors and to those around us. We will join hands in preaching the everlasting gospel.

Then, of course, verses 25 to 27 is the longest benediction that Paul ever wrote in the New Testament. He begins with his great concern that the believers in Rome should be established in the gospel and in Jesus Christ. And that is my prayer for you. Then he gives all the glory to God. I must say a word about the benediction because he goes on to say:

Now to him who is able to establish you by my

gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed...

What was this mystery that was kept secret and now is made known? What is Paul talking about? Well, if you read the next sentence, it comes out:

...and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him — to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

What is this mystery? The mystery is that the plan of salvation was not reserved only for the Jews but for all nations. The gospel is to go to all people of all classes and of all nations. Every tribe, nation, and creed must hear the gospel and that commission God has given us.

God has raised the Advent Movement to present to the world the matchless charms of our Lord Jesus Christ. The reason why He hasn't come

is not because He has delayed His coming or has failed to keep His promise, but because we have failed to send this message to the world. Please remember, Paul is saying this gospel is not limited to the Jews. It is for all nations, for all people. God wants all men and women to accept this gospel through a heart obedience to the truth as it in Christ.

As I read this chapter, there were two phrases that had the same meaning that kept hitting me in the face, two phrases that had been repeated time and time again in this chapter. Those phrases are: “in the Lord” and “in Christ.”

Let’s start with Romans 16:1:

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.

The first person he sends greetings to is Phoebe, who is a servant of the church. Look at verse two. What does he say to the church at Rome?

I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

“Receive her in the Lord.” Now what did Paul mean? What did Paul mean when he said when he says in verse three:

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

“My fellow workers in Christ Jesus.” And so he repeats this. In verse seven you have:

Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

“They were in Christ before I was.” In verse eight, you have “in the Lord.” In verse nine, you have “workers in Christ.” In verse ten, you have

“in Christ.” And so on. He is repeating these phrases “in the Lord” and “in Christ.” For every person he mentions, he mentions this phrase. What did he mean by that?

Let’s look at the first one and that will give us the clue to all the rest. He says to the church at Rome, “Please receive Phoebe in the Lord.” Each one of us has a dual identity. First is what we are in ourselves. We may be poor, we may be uneducated, we may be educated, or we may be rich. We may all have different identities personally, but Paul is not asking the church at Rome to accept her as she is in herself. He’s asking them to accept her as she is in Christ. In other words, “I want you to receive Phoebe as if she is Christ.” You will notice that this is the clear teaching of the New Testament.

Here are two examples. There is a chapter in the book of Matthew where Jesus divides the human race into two camps, the sheep and the goats. Matthew 25:31-36:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Notice what He says to the sheep: “Come and inherit the kingdom of My Father which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me. I was naked and you clothed me. I was in prison and you visited me.” He did not say, “My followers were hungry and you fed them.” He said, “I was hungry and you fed

me. I was naked and you clothed me.” Christ has identified Himself with every human being.

And when the believers said to Jesus, “But when did we do these things to you?” he replied [Matthew 25:40]:

I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.

Christ became one with us when He came to this world. One of His names was Immanuel, which means “God with us.” In Hebrews 2:11 we are told that:

Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

He has identified Himself with the human race and so, when you mistreat any human being, you are mistreating Christ. If you reject any believer in the church, you are rejecting Christ. We covered this in chapters 14 and 15. If God has received

you, who am I to reject you?

Here is another example. Paul was persecuting the church. You are familiar with that fact and know that it was before he was converted. He was a man of whom the Christian church was afraid. With all authority from the Jewish leaders, he was going to Damascus to persecute the Christians in Damascus and Christ met him on the road. Do you remember what Christ said to him? Acts 9:4:

He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

Not the church, but “why do you persecute me?” Every time you say anything negative about a fellow believer, please remember, you are saying it against Christ. This is the whole emphasis of Paul. Paul is saying, “Please, I want you to greet this people, I want you to accept them.” Why? Because we are all one in Christ. That is the key emphasis of chapter 16.

It has been recognized by many Bible scholars

today that the “in Christ” motif is the central theme of Paul’s theology. As I bring this book to an end, I want to emphasize this in our closing study because we need to realize that, even though we are many individuals in this church, we are only one, one body.

First, I want to remind you what Paul has already taught you in chapter six of Romans, verse three. What Paul is doing is summing up everything that he taught. I am simply going to remind you. Chapter six of Romans verse three. The first thing that every believer must recognize is this: when you were baptized you were not baptized into a denomination, you were baptized into Christ. Romans 6:3:

Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

“Do you not know (says Paul to the believers) that all of us who were baptized into” what? Not the Seventh-day Adventist Church but “into Christ

Jesus.” This is a key teaching of Paul. If you look at Galatians 3:27, He says the same thing:

...For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Now, if that is true, if all of us have been baptized into Christ, the next thing that comes up to us is that we are all one body. And if we are one body, then we are members of each other. Turn to chapter 12 of Romans, verse five. This is what Paul brings out in the ethical section of Romans:

...So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

So we, being many, are one body in Christ. We may not be one body in this town. We may not be one body in this nation, but in Christ we are one body. And because we are one body in Christ, we are individually members of one another. I would like to add to this 1 Corinthians 12:12-13. There Paul is saying the same thing. He puts it in very clear words so we will read it:

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

This wonderful truth so gripped the early Christian Church that they would meet together. Please remember, if you think we have class distinctions today, you should have lived in the days of Paul and of Christ. The gap between the haves and have-nots, the gap between the social classes, was far greater in the days of the early Christians than it is today. We are living in a capitalistic society. The early Christians were living in a slave society. Forty to 60 percent of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves. The rest were masters. Between the two was a wide, wide canyon. They never met together socially.

Then there was another division, a very big division, and that was between the Jews and

Gentiles. These believers — Jews and Gentiles, slaves and masters — met together in a home. They worshipped together. They ate together and they called it the “agape feast,” the “feast of love” that brings men and women together, all classes and all distinctions together. You have the educated and you have the slaves, eating together at the same table. So that even the enemies of the gospel, historians like Cicero and Celsus, had to confess, “These Christians know how to love each other.” That is what it means to be one in Christ.

Now how can we make this practical? How can the body of Christ be one? How can we be united? You will discover that, in the New Testament, Romans 12 brings this out and also Ephesians chapters four and five and also 1 Corinthians 12. Paul will use the human body as an example, as a metaphor for how the church should function. Now we have a wonderful human body in the sense that your body and my body are perfectly united with itself. I have never, in all my years had the problem where my hands and my legs fought against each other. Never! And I’m

sure you have the same experience. Why is it that our human bodies are perfectly united and perfectly coordinated? Why? Two reasons. There are other reasons, but two main reasons:

1. In my body, there is only one boss: my mind. The rest of my body — my arms, my ears, my eyes, my legs, my stomach — are slaves to the mind. What the mind says, the body does. No question. If my mind says to the hands, “Wash the feet,” my hands don’t say, “Why should I wash those ugly feet?” No questions.

For the church to experience the same unity, you and I must become slaves of Jesus Christ because the church is the body and Christ is the head. If all of us were slaves to Christ, we would solve a lot of problems. One of the key terms used in the New Testament for Christ is “Kurios,” which is the Greek word for Lord. It is much stronger than the English word “Lord.” It means that Christ is not only the Saviour of the church, but He is its Lord. He is our Lord and Master. He wants every believer to live in total subjection to Him. That’s

why, in many of Paul's epistles, he introduces himself as a slave of Jesus Christ. This is what Jesus prayed for. He said, "Father, just like I am united to You, totally dependent on You, living in total subjection to You, I want My believers to live in total subjection to Me."

There will be times when you will not agree with the will of God. What do you do then? What does a slave do when his master says not to do this? He may mutter under his breath, but he'd better do it. The humanity of Christ did not want to go to the cross. Three times He prayed [Matthew 26:39-44, Mark 14:35-41], "Father, if it is possible, remove the cup." But Jesus was a slave of God, so He said,

Yet not as I will, but as you will.

Turn to Ephesians chapter four. This is God's desire for this church and I pray that it will become a reality. Ephesians 4:1-6:

As a prisoner for the Lord ["the Kurios"], then,

I urge you [beseech you, plead with you] to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

What is Paul saying here? There is only one Saviour and only one Lord in the church and if we were all subject to that one God instead of dividing ourselves — one for this man and one for the other man, like the Corinthians were doing — we will never be able to reveal the power of the gospel.

2. But there is a second requirement, a second principle of the human body. That is the reason why the human body is in perfect unity, perfect coordination: there is a living connection between the human body and the mind. My hands, my legs, my eyes, my ears have a living connection to the

mind through the nerves, so that there is a constant communication between the two.

When I hurt my toe, the toe sends a message to the head, “I’m hurting, I kicked a stone.” The head sends a message to the hand, “The toe needs help. Go to its aid.” That is how the body works. If you and I keep a living connection with Christ, besides being slaves to Him, then, when a person is hurting, Christ will come to another member and say, “Look, that person is hurting, go and visit him. Help that person.” The church would then be working in unity and love.

Now there is one difference. My hands, my legs, my eyes do not have the power of choice. They are simply automatic slaves to my head. But believers, the body of Christ made up of believers who do have their own minds, have the power of choice and it is possible for Christians to disagree with the Lord. It is possible for Christians to disagree with each other and that’s the problem.

So I realize that it was true in the New

Testament and it was true through the history of the Christian Church and it is true now. It is impossible for all of us to see eye-to-eye on everything. It's impossible. We will disagree. What do we do with a disagreement? Do we knock each other down? I have a little quotation for you. By the way, this quotation is reproduced in the Sixth [SDA] Bible Commentary, page 1083. But I want you to read with me the first five or six lines:

“The strength of God’s people lies in their union with Him through His only begotten Son and their union with one another.”

The strength of this church is based on two things: our unity with Christ and our union with one another. This is a fundamental truth of the New Testament. This is one of the great truths of the “In Christ” motif. We are all one in Christ, therefore, we are all members of each other. Now listen to the next statement:

“There are no two leaves of a tree precisely alike, neither do all minds run in the same

direction, but while this is so, there may be unity in diversity.”

That is why, when people in the church try to divide the church over theology, I know for a fact that they are not studying Jesus Christ. We may disagree. What do we do? If we go to Matthew 18:15, it gives us some counsel:

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

If you disagree with your pastor, please come and see him. Please don't tell others that, "My pastor won't see me." That's a lie. I have never refused to see anybody. I have never refused to discuss theology or Bible with anybody. That's my calling. I love to discuss Bible. In fact, I have spent much time discussing the Bible; unfortunately, most of the people involved were not members of my church. If I am going to give time to nonmembers, I am more than willing to give time to my own flock. Just come and see me.

We may not agree in everything, but I know one thing: I will respect you for where you stand and please respect me.

Yes, we must be united in fundamentals and, by fundamentals, I mean the 27 beliefs that are in our church manual. I have no problem there. When it comes to nonfundamentals, we need to learn to respect each other. It isn't that some believe in the Bible and some don't, or some believe in the Spirit of Prophecy and some don't. That's not the issue. The issue is that we may not agree in interpretation of Scripture or of Spirit of Prophecy and that's because I don't interpret the same way as you. You can't accuse me of not believing. That's not being fair. That's judging. We need to realize that we need not see eye-to-eye in everything, but we need to learn to respect each other. We will never grow in Christ as long as we are fighting like cats and dogs.

Our church today — I'm talking of the denomination — is polarizing over theology. We will not solve the problem by talking about each

other. I mentioned an illustration in the past and will mention it again. In 1980, the Pentecostal Church of Addis Ababa [Ethiopia] of 800 members asked me to take a week of prayer in their church. That is something of a miracle for a Pentecostal Church to ask a Seventh-day Adventist preacher whom they accuse of being “Old Covenant” to preach in their church.

I took the week of prayer and gave them a series of studies on the gospel. The pastor came to me just before the end of the week of prayer and he said, “We would like you to preach on the Sabbath because my members are confused as to what Adventists teach on the Sabbath. Most of us believe that you are keeping the Sabbath legalistically, but, from what you have preached to us, you have given us clearly the impression that Adventists believe in the gospel. So could you please give us a study on the Sabbath and relate it to the gospel you have preached here?”

I said, “Surely, I’ll be more than happy to do that.” I gave them a study on the Sabbath as the

seal of righteousness by faith. Do you know what the church board did? They met together and the pastor said, “What shall we do with this?” And the board took an action. The action was that, “From now on, we shall keep the Sabbath.” They changed the name of their church. They called their church the Seventh-day Pentecostal Church.

Well, I came under fire from my own brethren. The fire was, “Why did you allow them to do that? Why didn’t you bring them to our church? Can you imagine? Our membership would have increased by 800!” I kept quiet. I didn’t know how to explain it to them. I knew what the problem was. But three months later, the pastor of the Pentecostal Church, now the Seventh-day Pentecostal Church, came to hear me preach in our own Adventist Church and, when the service was over, I introduced him to the Sabbath School Secretary of our Union. The Sabbath School secretary said to this Pentecostal pastor, “I hear that you people have changed your name to ‘Seventh-day Pentecostal Church.’”

The pastor replied, “Yes, that is right. You can blame this man,” and he pointed to me.

Then the Sabbath School secretary said to him, “Why did you change your name? Wouldn’t it have been better for you to join our church?”

The pastor didn’t know what to say. In fact, he was embarrassed. I said to the Pentecostal pastor, “Go ahead, tell him. They need to know.”

“Well,” he said, “we came and looked at your church. We discovered two things. Number one, your church is dead. There’s no life in it. Number two, when you Adventists learn to love each other, we’ll join your church.”

Now that was a slap in the face, but what he said was honest. We were fighting like cats and dogs. The fight was between the nationals and the missionaries and it was very obvious for visitors that had their ears open. So, my dear people, as long as people see division in our church, we will never be able to witness the gospel.

Not too long ago, a young theology student came up to me and said, “Pastor, I was told by one of your members not to come to this church because I would hear heresy, and I came just to hear what heresy you were preaching. Now I would like to join your church.”

Folks, if I am preaching heresy, please come and see me. I want unity in this church. If you disagree with me, I’m willing to sit down with the Word of God and tell you where I stand.

My prayer for this church is that we’ll be one in Christ; even though we may not see eye-to-eye in everything yet, we’ll have unity in diversity; that our love for each other will be so great, so strong, that our differences won’t matter. It is my prayer that others will see a church that knows how to love and how to care.

God gave us a special message a hundred years ago. That message was to lift up Christ as the Saviour of the world. But that message was also to

bring unity and love into this church. Unfortunately, it did not work out that way. Sister White had to rebuke our brethren many times. But, after 100 years, God has turned to a Calvinist — a Calvinist, of all people — and has given him this message, the truth as it is in Christ. One of those men who read that book by this Calvinist, Neal Punt, was our own ministerial secretary of the General Conference, Bob Spangler. He said, “This book has done something for me. Now I look at every human being in a different light than I used to.”

Every human being you see — whether he’s in the gutter or if he is on the throne — please remember one thing and that is this: every human being is a soul that has been purchased, that has been redeemed by Jesus Christ. And when you see each one of us, it doesn’t matter how we appear to each other, we may not like each other by our feelings, we may not agree with each other, but one thing is true: we all belong to Jesus Christ. Therefore, we all belong to each other.

Therefore, there is no such thing as Jew or Gentile, male or female in the Christian Church. We are one in Christ. But it is not enough to preach this. The world must see this. I close with the words of Jesus Christ once again. I repeat what Jesus said in His prayer to His Father, that we may be one that the world may know that He has sent us.

Jesus said to His disciples, “By this the world will know that we are His disciples: when we have agape, when we have love one for another.” It is my prayer that we will put aside our differences and, if we disagree, we will come and speak to the one with whom we disagree and try to hash this out as Christians. And we will grow as Christians and anyone who comes to this church as a visitor will see in us a united church lifting up Jesus Christ. That’s my prayer in Jesus’ name.