

ROMANS

by Robert C. Walton

**Grades 9-12
Year 3
Quarter 4**

THE DEPRAVITY OF MAN

Romans 1:18-32

Lesson Aim

To demonstrate to students the universality and perversity of man's rejection of God.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:26 - "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."

Lesson Background

The book of Romans is perhaps the most complete and profound exposition of the Gospel to be found in Scripture. It consists of a letter from the Apostle Paul to the church in a city he had never visited, though as chapter sixteen makes clear, he knew quite a few people in the church. The letter probably was written from the city of Corinth in A.D. 55, during Paul's third missionary journey.

The theme of the book is expressed in 1:16-17 - "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. 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.'" In this letter, Paul expounds the Gospel as a revealer of the righteousness of God that is apprehended by faith and that unites Jew and Gentile. Thus it should not surprise us that the sovereign grace of God, salvation by faith alone, and the relationship between Israel and the church are important themes of the epistle.

The structure of the book follows the usual Pauline pattern of theological exposition followed by practical application. One helpful way of outlining the book divides it as follows:

SIN - chapters 1-2
SALVATION - chapters 3-5
SANCTIFICATION - chapters 6-8
SOVEREIGNTY - chapters 9-11
SERVICE - chapters 12-16

In the early chapters of the book, Paul seeks to vindicate the righteousness of God by proving that all are guilty before Him, and thus fully deserve His judgment. He goes about this task in three parts, demonstrating that whether a man is an outright pagan (1:18-32), a cultured unbeliever (2:1-16), or a Jew (2:17-3:8), he is guilty before God and stands before Him with no excuse whatsoever. It is the first section of this argument that we will be examining this week. Paul demonstrates in universal terms the departure of man from the truth of God. While what he says here is specifically directed toward the heathen, it has applicability to all men, cultured and primitive, religious and agnostic. What Paul deals with in the following chapters are really special cases of what he presents in chapter one.

It would be very easy to wax philosophical about the contents of this first chapter of Romans. Apologists such as Cornelius van Til have derived much concerning the plight of modern man from this chapter. For high school students, however, the main thrust of the chapter must be the universal nature of man's rebellion against God and the terrible results of this rebellion in human society. Practical application to the world in which we live is easily made, particularly when Paul starts talking about sexual perversion being a result of man's rejection of God.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the class by dropping the following question on your students: "Are those who have never had the opportunity to hear the Gospel going to hell?" Allow them to discuss the question for a few minutes, insisting that they back up their assertions from Scripture and not just express feelings on the subject. Then tell them that the passage of Scripture we are about to study is designed to answer that very question. After giving a little bit of background information on the book of Romans, read together Romans 1:18-32.

Explain to your students that this passage presents to us Paul's Theory of Devolution. In it we see man's decline from what God made him to be. The result is something barely above the level of a beast. We must also notice that there is a close relationship between a man's view of God and his view of himself.

This interrelationship between one's view of God and one's view of man may be seen in the following outline of the passage, which will serve as the basis for today's study:

Man in the Image of God (verses 18-20)
God in the Image of Man (verses 21-23a)
God in the Image of Beast (verse 23b)
Man in the Image of Beast (verses 24-32)

1. Man in the Image of God (verses 18-20)

As we saw in the first quarter of this year, God made man unique because He made him in His image. That image gave man certain characteristics that set him apart from all other creatures (ask your students to recall some of these characteristics) and allowed him to worship and communicate with God Himself.

Even after the Fall, God continued to reveal Himself to man, both in general and special revelation. In these verses, however, we are concerned primarily with general revelation, the way in which God has revealed Himself to all people. How do these verses tell us that God has made Himself known to all? In what ways does the creation reveal God's "eternal power and divine nature"? Is the revelation of God in nature sufficient to bring a person to salvation? How then can Paul say that all are without excuse?

In response to the above questions, note that Paul has given us the answer to the question regarding the person who has never heard the Gospel. God has revealed His own power and deity through the world He has made. Sinful man universally rejects that knowledge, thus rendering him guilty before God. It matters not at all that general revelation is not sufficient to save - what matters is that man sinfully rejects that which God has given to him, and thus renders himself guilty before God and fully deserving of God's judgment.

2. God in the Image of Man (verses 21-23a)

The extent of man's sinful rejection of God can be seen in the fact that man, not content to reject the true God, then proceeds to devise gods of his own making, worshiping the products of his own mind. Man needs to worship something (this is part of the image of God in man), and when he does not worship the true God, some substitute must be found. Paul sees this as an act of crass ingratitude. Man declined from failing to glorify God to failing even to thank God, and then finally got to the point where he could no longer see God, but instead worshiped a god of his own making.

At this point in the lesson, ask your students to name some of the ways in which man has devised his own gods. Make sure they go beyond the pagan religions that worship strange, non-existent deities, and include the philosophies that modern thinkers have devised to explain the world in which they live. These man-made gods can include science, freedom, material possessions, fame, and power. Men have remade God in their own image, and as a result wind up worshiping a god who does not exist, and who has no power at all. Though such men are considered by this world to be among the wise, God rightly calls them fools.

3. God in the Image of Beast (verse 23b)

It is easy for sophisticated men to ridicule those who would bow down to idols of stone or wood. Yet is it not true that some of our most "enlightened" people today have stooped to the point of worshiping animals and inanimate creatures? What are we to say of the animal rights activists who would argue against animal experimentation on the grounds that animals have the same rights people do? What of the environmentalists who would sacrifice the welfare of millions of people for the sake of some obscure species of plant? It is not only the heathen in the jungle who have made beasts and rocks their gods. Many modern men are no better than they.

4. Man in the Image of Beast (verses 24-32)

The Bible tells us that man is made in the image of God. Should it be surprising to us, then, if we see man becoming like the gods he has chosen to worship? The man who makes a beast his god is soon no

better than a beast himself. How can a man be better than what he worships? The decline into immorality described by Paul in these verses illustrates exactly that point - that man becomes like what he worships. Several points should be noted here.

The breakdown of the distinction between Creator and creature leads inevitably to the breakdown of the distinction between man and beast. Only the image of God separates man from beast, and when that image is no longer acknowledged, man has no reason to think of himself as any different from the animals. The theory of evolution, for instance, is a natural outgrowth of the rejection of the divine image in man.

Secondly, the rejection of God always leads to sexual immorality and perversion. From the early chapters of Genesis we see the close link between the spiritual and the sexual. God made man male and female when He made Adam and Eve in His image, and the Fall immediately produced sexual shame. Throughout history, those who have rejected God have turned to sexual perversion (the Canaanites in the Old Testament are a good example of an extreme case, but the depravity associated with the idolatrous practices of Israel makes the same point). Again, a connection must be made with the prevalent belief in evolution in our own day. Can anyone seriously question that belief in evolution has contributed to the decline of moral standards, so that in our own day we find people “doing what comes naturally,” then arguing that instinctive sexual behavior cannot possibly be wrong, and supporting that argument by citing the examples of the animals? Paul even points out the relationship of homosexuality and lesbianism to the rejection of the sovereign God, which has become abundantly clear in recent years.

Thirdly, we should note that God’s judgment against such rejection of Himself is to let evil take its natural course. The wickedness described in verses 28-32 is not something that God has imposed upon man as a result of his disobedience. It is rather the natural consequences of that disobedience, which God has chosen not to restrain. Man has, in a sense, made his own bed, and God is allowing him to sleep in it!

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by noting the fitness of Paul’s description of man’s rebellion in the light of the modern world. If these things were true of man in Paul’s day, how much more are they true today? This dismal picture is given at the beginning of the book for a reason, however. The focus of the book is not on sin, but on salvation. The book of Romans presents the glorious Gospel of God’s redeeming grace, which is able to reach out even to sinners such as Paul has described in chapter one.

THE SINFULNESS OF ALL

Romans 2:1-3:20

Lesson Aim

To make clear to students that all are sinners and stand condemned before God.

Memory Verse

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.”

Lesson Background

In last week’s lesson, we saw the universal rejection of God’s revelation of Himself in nature by sinful man and the immorality and degradation that resulted from that rejection. In this week’s lesson, we will consider Paul’s response to those who would plead that the dismal picture painted in Romans 1 does not apply to them.

In the second and third chapters of Romans, we find two groups of “special pleaders.” These upright men (at least in their own eyes) are the moral Gentile and the Jew. Paul’s purpose in the passage before us today is to prove conclusively that these men are no less guilty before God than the overtly immoral heathen who were the focus of attention last week.

The major application of this passage to your students lies in the fact that both of these groups consider their works sufficient to render them acceptable to God. It is crucial that your students understand that neither the upright unbeliever nor the church-goer has anything to stand upon when he is asked to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Neither love of neighbor nor faithful participation in worship qualifies

a man for forgiveness of sin. Having shown that man's worst is a result of his rejection of God, Paul now shows that man's best falls far short of making him pleasing to God, or even of counterbalancing his guilt.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson with a review of last week's material, noting particularly Paul's conclusion concerning the state of rebellious mankind. Ask the students if everyone in the world would be willing to acknowledge that Paul's description in Romans 1 applied to him. Why would some claim to be exceptions to Paul's dismal picture? Two obvious categories of dissenters would include those who try to live good, moral lives, and those who sincerely worship in a way that they believe is satisfying to God. Note that it is precisely these two groups of people to whom Paul responds in the second and third chapters of Romans, concluding that they, too, are guilty before God.

1. The Case of The Moral Unbeliever (2:1-16)

Paul here addresses those who believe themselves to be excluded from the condemnation of chapter one. They look down their noses at the wicked sinners around them and consider themselves to be exempt from God's judgment because they live good lives and do the best they can.

Paul makes several points about such a presumptuous attitude. In verse 3, he notes that those who look down on others do the same things as those they are condemning. He does not mean by this that they are openly immoral or perverse, but rather he implies the same things Jesus said in Matthew 5, namely that those who harbor attitudes in their hearts contrary to the will of God are just as guilty as those who put those attitudes into practice through various kinds of overt sins. Those who hate, lust, and harbor pride in their hearts are no better than those who murder, commit adultery, and involve themselves in sexual perversion.

In verse 4, Paul makes the point that those who take the attitude that they are better than others are presuming upon the patience of God. They think that because they are successful in the world, God must approve of their manner of living. In fact, the absence of God's judgment in their lives is not a mark of God's approval, but rather of His incredible patience. The proper response to such goodness is not to presume, but to repent.

After a stern warning of the judgment to come in verses 5-11, Paul indicates in the closing paragraph of this section that ignorance of the law of God is no excuse for the moral unbeliever. God does not need to judge people by a standard that is unknown to them, though, as we saw last week, nature itself provides plenty of reason for God to judge everyone. Paul here makes the point that every man would fall under judgment on the basis of his conscience alone.

The conscience of man clearly is not flawless. Men may be misled by their consciences, either to regard that which is evil as good or to regard the good as evil. Men may even sear their consciences to the point where their consciences no longer warn them when they are contemplating evil behavior. In spite of all this, Paul makes one irrefutable point - every man at one time or another has violated his own conscience. He concludes then that, if a man has violated his own standards even once, how can he claim to be innocent before the perfect righteousness of God?

Ask your students at this point how the arguments presented by the moral unbeliever show a very narrow understanding of what sin is. They should recognize that those who would maintain their own fitness before God tend to define sin purely in terms of externals and allow their consciences to rationalize away their sin rather than recognizing the conscience as a gift of God to reveal to them their own sinfulness.

2. The Case of the Religious Jew (2:17-3:8)

While the moral unbeliever may not have a leg to stand on when trying to justify himself before God, surely the Jew, the member of the Chosen People, would have reason to expect that he would not share the condemnation of the rest of mankind. After all, he worships in the Temple, offers sacrifices, and observes the Law of Moses. How could Paul have the nerve to imply that he should be classed with the Gentile dogs? Paul turns his arguments around, however, to show that the great privileges enjoyed by the Jew are also the sources of his condemnation before God.

The first of the privileges brought out by Paul is the law itself (2:17-24). The law was given to the Jew, but this does not automatically make him a keeper of the law. In fact, the knowledge of the law should reveal to him even more clearly how seriously he has violated it, and thus brought himself under the judgment of God. The law was to be a teacher leading the Jew to repentance, not a source of pride that caused him to set himself up above others.

The second privilege of the Jew was circumcision (2:25-29). This set him apart from the nations and was considered by the Jew to be a badge of honor. Paul points out quite bluntly that circumcision of the flesh means nothing to one who breaks the law. It has value only to one who is also circumcised in heart, who has been changed by the Spirit of God. No ritual can cleanse the heart; religious rituals only have meaning for those who have already been cleansed.

The third privilege of the Jew was the possession of the Scriptures (3:1-8). Again, though, this is a situation in which knowledge condemns if it is not coupled with obedience. All that the Scriptures taught them was that God punished sinners who rebelled against Him. The stupid argument that their sin should be praised because it gave God a chance to display His glory is rightfully dismissed by Paul as unworthy of comment.

The conclusion drawn by Paul about the Jew, then, is that his very privileges, which set him apart from the Gentile, condemn him before God. He violates the law, makes circumcision a meaningless religious ritual, and uses the Scriptures as an excuse to rationalize his own disobedience. Like so many religious people today, the things that he hopes will win him favor before God are the very things for which God condemns him. Conclude this section by making sure your students see the connection between the arguments used by the Jews and those so often used by those today who would see their baptism, church membership, or church attendance as rendering them acceptable to God. How do these practices become the very sources of their condemnation?

3. The Conclusion of the Matter (3:9-20)

Paul concludes his case as prosecuting attorney by citing precedents - a long list of quotations from the Old Testament that reinforce his contention that all the world is condemned as sinners before a righteous God. Can any in your class seriously doubt at this point the applicability of the verses Paul quotes? The response of any who hear this case must be silence (verse 19).

Conclusion

Again conclude the session by reminding your students that, though this may be the end of Paul's case against sinners, it is not the end of his presentation of the Gospel. It is true that all are sinners, but it is also true that God has made a remedy for sin through His Son Jesus Christ.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Romans 3:21-4:25

Lesson Aim

To demonstrate to students God's just and merciful solution to the problem of sin.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:28 - "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

Lesson Background

The passage before us today expresses the heart of the Gospel. Paul has painstakingly demonstrated in the first two and a half chapters of Romans that all are sinners and stand justly condemned before God because of their rebellion against Him. This leaves us with a problem, of course. If all people are sinners and can do nothing to save themselves, how are they to be saved? If God saves them despite their sin, would this not then undermine His justice? Paul sets out in the passage before us today to prove three things: that God can save sinners and still be just, that salvation must be by faith alone, and that this salvation by faith is available equally to Jews and Gentiles. These three themes are stated at the end of chapter three, then illustrated using the example of Abraham in chapter four.

The points made by Paul in this section of Romans may seem painfully obvious to most Christians, and it is very difficult for us to imagine the impact of these ideas on the Roman church. It is important for us to see these issues with fresh eyes, and hopefully to regain some of the excitement that Paul intended his readers to feel upon realization of these truths. A proper understanding of the problem requires comprehension of the relationships between Jews and Gentiles in Rome. The capital city of the empire had a large Jewish population, and the Roman church reflected this in its membership, which was predominantly

Gentile, but contained a significant Jewish minority. The Jews were convinced of the validity of the position Paul had challenged in chapters two and three - that they, God's Chosen People, had a special standing before God that Gentiles could not share. They based this claim on the rite of circumcision and the Jewish knowledge of the law. While Gentiles could know the law, they could never be fully obedient to it as long as they remained uncircumcised, and thus they could not be acceptable to God.

Paul demolished the first part of that argument by showing that no one was acceptable before God because of the universal blight of sin. He now goes on to dispose of the second part by showing that circumcision is no advantage, since Abraham was declared righteous by God before he was circumcised. If circumcision was not the source of his righteousness, it must have been something else, and Paul succeeds in demonstrating that the "something else" was faith. This truth should have been an encouragement to the Gentiles, the Jews, and the church at large. For the Gentiles, it meant that they could be right with God without becoming Jews and without earning God's approval. For the Jews, it meant that God's approval was not conditioned upon their fastidiousness in keeping the ceremonial law, but upon their faith. And for the church at large, it meant a basis for unity that could overcome the often-difficult barrier between Jews and Gentiles.

For your students, the importance of this lesson lies in the simple truth of the Gospel - that God has promised to declare righteous those who put their trust in the blood of Christ, and that no one need think that he must earn favor with God. Though the Jewish-Gentile issue is not a burning one in the church today, it wouldn't hurt to emphasize to your students the principle of the unity of the body of Christ that may be derived from this chapter.

Lesson Procedure

Begin by reviewing the lessons from the last two weeks, noting that Paul had left his readers in a rather depressing position with his declaration that everyone must stand in silent acknowledgment of his guilt before God. God could quite legitimately condemn everyone to hell, and no one could accuse Him of not being fair. At this point, raise the following question before your students: "If everyone deserves hell, would not God be unjust if He allowed anyone to go to heaven?" Make sure they see the point that if God does not punish sin, He denies Himself by being less than just. Consequently, God cannot simply ignore sin. It is the solution of this dilemma that is found in the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, which Paul presents in the passage before us today. The solution to the dilemma is set forth by Paul through three simple statements, which he makes in chapter three, then illustrates in chapter four. These three statements will make up the outline of today's lesson.

1. God is both just and the justifier of sinners (3:25-26)

After making a general statement of what he intends to prove in 3:21-24, Paul turns to the problem of the justice of God in verses 25 and 26. He notes that only by the death of Christ could God maintain His justice and still save sinners. Why is this the case? The reason is because Jesus served as a substitute for sinners, bearing their punishment by shedding His own blood on the cross. Thus God righteously punished the sin that was such an offense against Him, while at the same time providing deliverance for those who put their trust in Christ.

Of course, this raises another question, which Paul postpones until later in the book. Naturally enough, many wonder at this point how the justice of God may be maintained if the death of Christ atoned for the sins of some, but not all, sinners. Though many respond by saying that the difference lies in the

sinners, who are differentiated by their acts of faith (or lack thereof), Paul will make it clear later (in chapter 9 especially) that the difference lies, not in the sinners themselves, but in the sovereign purposes of God.

2. Salvation is by faith, not works (3:27-28; 4:1-8)

This glorious truth is probably the best-known teaching of the letter to the Romans, and it was this fact that God used so powerfully in the life of Martin Luther to stir up the revival known as the Protestant Reformation. In Luther's day, the sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church had become like the ceremonies of the Jewish law - most people believed them essential to salvation, and in fact the only right way by which the favor of God could be sought.

It is at this point that Paul's argument in the first three chapters becomes so crucial. He has already demonstrated that no man, whether immoral or moral, whether religious or irreligious, could please God by his actions or could hide behind an excuse that would absolve him of responsibility for his sins. He thus eliminates the law as a basis for salvation. If the law is insufficient to save, what then can supplant it? Paul answers that the only basis upon which a person may be declared righteous by God is faith in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. What may seem obvious to us produced considerable skepticism in Paul's readers, however. They wondered if he hadn't made up some new doctrine. Paul then demonstrates that the Old Testament supports his contention that salvation is by faith alone, and does so by using the example of Abraham, the father of the Jewish people (4:1-8).

Paul's main point here is that Abraham was declared righteous on the basis of his faith in God, not because of anything that he did. To prove his contention, Paul quotes Genesis 15:6, then further bolsters his point by quoting Psalm 32:1-2, where David speaks of God crediting him with righteousness despite his sin, not because of any works he had done. Thus Paul emphasizes the "good news" of the Gospel, that our hopeless condition before God is not a barrier to salvation, but the very "empty hands" that God requires of those who come before Him, and that He graciously fills with the righteousness of Christ.

Spend some time here asking your class about some of the different ways people today think that works will save them. Be sure to go beyond the obvious salvation-by-works approaches of groups such as the Catholic Church, and note that many professing Christians think that their baptism, church attendance, giving, or work in the church will make them worthy of the favor of God. In the next section, Paul not only makes the point that Abraham was declared righteous before his circumcision to show that Gentiles could be saved as well as Jews, he also wants to show that obedience is the result of salvation, not its cause.

3. Salvation is for Jews and Gentiles alike (3:29-31; 4:9-25)

Paul in these verses is basically undermining the belief that anyone can be right with God on the basis of his physical descent. Those who descended from Abraham are not necessarily Abraham's spiritual children, any more than those who today are raised in Christian families are necessarily Christians. This is, of course, just another variation on the argument of salvation by works. Some maintain that they deserve God's favor, not because of what they have done, but because of who they are by virtue of birth. Paul shows that the true descendants of Abraham are not those who are part of his physical heritage (i.e., by circumcision), but those who share his faith. Thus he may legitimately be called the father of many nations, not just one. As a closing illustration, Paul notes that the faith of Abraham was such that he was able to trust God to keep His promise about providing a son, even though it appeared to be a physical impossibility.

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by challenging your students concerning their own faith in God. Are they really trusting Christ to do for them what they cannot do for themselves, or are they instead trusting their family background, church attendance, moral living, or even their own faith to render them deserving of salvation in the sight of God? Unbelievers should be encouraged that fitness before God is not a prerequisite to trusting Him.

Also remind your students that, if salvation is by faith rather than works, no one has the right to consider himself more or less deserving of the grace of God than anyone else. The fact of the matter is that all are equally undeserving, and therefore no one has the right to consider himself superior to others.

ADAM AND CHRIST

Romans 5

Lesson Aim

To show students the difference between the condition of those who are in Adam and the state of those who are in Christ.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:29 - "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."

Lesson Background

As we move today into the fifth chapter of Romans, we find Paul continuing his exposition of the Gospel of salvation by faith in Christ. He has made clear in the preceding chapters that God maintained His holiness with regard to man's sin by giving His Son as a substitute for sinners who place their trust in Him. In chapter five, Paul elaborates on the relationship between Christ and His people.

He has already demonstrated that the death of Christ paid the penalty for the sins of those who come to Him in faith. In addition to the removal of sin, we should note that there are also some positive results that accrue to the believer as a result of Christ's death on his behalf. Paul speaks of these things in the first half of Romans 5. After having talked about *what* the believer experiences as a result of Christ's death, he then goes on in the second half of the chapter to explain how these benefits come to the believer through the death of Christ. The key concept here is that of the representative. Paul indicates that Christ accomplished redemption on the cross as the representative of His people in the same sense that Adam brought sin on the entire human race by sinning as their representative in the Garden of Eden. Thus we have in the fifth chapter

of Romans the “what” and the “how” of the Gospel, as Paul tells us not only what believers gain from the death of Christ for them, but also the nature of the relationship that produced these benefits.

There is no question that your students may find some of the material in this chapter a bit obscure. Hopefully the practical nature of the benefits described in verses 1-11 will be of interest to them, and the illustrative character of verses 12-21 should help them to understand what is probably a very difficult bit of doctrine. While the illustration may enlighten their minds, you as a teacher should place your emphasis on the practical consequences of the work of Christ in the life of the believer, and challenge your believing students to live in the light of what Christ has done for them, while reminding the non-Christians in your class that those who are “in Adam” may come to be “in Christ” by faith.

Lesson Procedure

Last week, we saw that God had solved the sin problem through the work of His Son on the cross, and that salvation was to be gained only by faith in Him. Too many Christians think of salvation as something that happened in the past. In the next few chapters of Romans, Paul writes of the consequences of salvation in the present. What does it mean to me in my daily living that Christ has saved me from sin?

The chapter before us today, chapter five, may be divided into two sections. The first, verses 1-11, tells us what the believer can expect to have as a result of the death of Christ. The second part, verses 12-21, tells us how Christ and the believer are related to one another.

1. The “What” of the Gospel (verses 1-11)

This section of the lesson is best done inductively. Ask your students, working individually, to read through the first eleven verses of Romans 5 and write down everything they can find that Paul says Christians gain as a result of the death of Christ. When they are done, work through the section a verse at a time, writing on the board the things the students have found. The following is a representative list of some of the ideas to be found in Romans 5:1-11.

verse 1 - Paul tells us here that the Christian enjoys peace with God as a result of being saved by faith in Christ. Make sure the students understand that this is not a subjective feeling of peace (this could cause troubled Christians to question their salvation), but rather a peace treaty that signals the cessation of hostilities between God and the Christian.

verse 2 - Here we see that we presently enjoy the grace of God, in that we have a relationship with Him that we do not deserve. We also have joy because of the hope our salvation has given us for the future (note that hope in Scripture is not a wish based on uncertainty, but rather an expectation based on security). The believer can rejoice no matter what his earthly circumstances may be because he knows what awaits him in eternity.

verse 3 - This one sounds rather peculiar. One of the results of the death of Christ for the Christian is suffering (Paul’s discussion of the union of the believer with Christ at the end of the chapter helps to illumine this). Worse yet, Paul says we are supposed to rejoice in it! This is not because suffering is great fun, but because of what God uses it to bring about in our lives.

verse 4 - The suffering is a source of rejoicing because it produces three good things - perseverance, character, and hope. Suffering helps us to persevere in the faith because it forces us to depend continually on God rather than ourselves. The more we depend on God, the more He is able to shape

our characters so that they become more like that of Jesus. And the more we become like Jesus, the more we can be confident of our future place with Him in heaven.

verse 5 - Suffering, of course, is not the only way in which the death of Christ affects the lives of Christians now. If that were the case, we might wonder about God's concern for His children (a human father disciplines his children for their own benefit, but that should not be all he does for them). But Paul tells us here that God loves those who have trusted Christ and shows that love by giving to them His Holy Spirit.

verses 6-8 - Here Paul stops talking about the benefits of salvation for a minute and reminds his readers, lest they get the idea that these benefits are somehow deserved, that the death of Christ was such a great act of God's love because it was done in behalf of those who hated Him and had no right to such an unbelievable blessing. Paul also contrasts God's action with people's reluctance to give their lives in behalf of others.

verse 9 - Salvation also has a future benefit. The believer will never have to face the wrath of God because Christ has already faced it for him.

verses 10-11 - Paul speaks here of reconciliation, which indicates that the alienation that previously existed between God and sinners has been removed by the work of Christ. Christians are no longer separated from God, but have been brought close to Him by Jesus.

When the inductive study has been completed, review by enumerating the benefits listed, including the following: peace with God; present grace; confident expectation for the future; suffering with its resulting benefits of perseverance, character, and hope; the love of God; the Holy Spirit; deliverance from wrath; and reconciliation.

2. The "How" of the Gospel (verses 12-21)

One very basic question that needs to be raised concerning this whole matter of the Gospel is one that often gets overlooked. How can something done by Jesus count for us? Let your students kick this one around for a while. After a brief period of discussion, tell them that Paul answers the question in the second half of Romans 5. Read together verses 12-21. Before discussing it, ask your students what it means to be a Representative (a Congressman, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives or one of the state houses). They should realize rather readily that a Representative is one who is chosen by a group of people to act on behalf of those people. Note that in Romans 5:12-21, we have a similar idea being expressed. The major difference is that the representatives of whom Paul speaks, Adam and Christ, were not chosen by those they represent, but were chosen by God to represent "constituents" who were also designated by Him. Aside from the fact that both were representatives, the chapter gives us nothing but contrasts between the two. Note the following:

A. Whom did the two men represent?

Adam represented a physical race encompassing all of mankind. Christ represented a spiritual race, those chosen by God.

B. How did the two men fulfill their tasks?

Adam responded with disobedience, falling into sin. Christ obeyed God perfectly.

C. What did the two men pass on to those they represented?

Adam passed on sin, condemnation, and death. It is the result of his work that Paul already described in the first three chapters of the book. Christ, on the other hand, passed on righteousness, justification, and life.

What, then, is the answer to the question raised at the beginning of this section? The work of Jesus counts for the Christian because God said it would, in the same way that He designated Adam as the representative of mankind. How else could we explain the fact that not only was Adam's sin passed on to his descendants, but also his guilt?

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by going over once again the marvelous blessings belonging to the Christian by virtue of the grace of God. Ask your students if their own lives are characterized by the kind of rejoicing in the present (in spite of circumstances) and confidence in the future that Paul speaks of in Romans 5. Indicate also to the non-Christians in your class that their condition was described by Paul in terms of sin, condemnation, and death, but that they are not therefore without hope. They, too, can experience what Paul described in the first part of the chapter if they put their faith in Christ. The grace of Christ can overcome the sin of Adam.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

ADAM AND CHRIST

1. What does Paul mean in Romans 5:1 when he says Christians have peace with God?
2. Why should a Christian rejoice in sufferings, according to Romans 5:3-5?
3. What are the ways God showed His love for His people, according to Romans 5:5-8?
4. In Romans 5:12-21, Adam and Christ are described as representatives. Whom did they represent? What did those represented by them gain from what they accomplished?

UNION WITH CHRIST

Romans 6

Lesson Aim

To help the students understand the relationship between the Christian and sin as it relates to his union with Christ.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:30 - “And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”

Lesson Background

There can be no question that Christians continue to struggle with sin. The unrealistic expectations established by those who teach that sinless perfection is possible in this life have done much damage to the souls of many sincere believers. But it is equally dangerous to treat sin with casual inevitability. Too many believers care little about their sin because they blithely assume that, since they will never be rid of it in this life, they shouldn't worry too much about it. While John addresses the first problem in his first epistle, it is the second with which Paul concerns himself in Romans 6. He uses the truth of the believer's union with Christ, which he described in the second half of chapter five, to show that sin is to be fought and overcome, not accepted and ignored.

The key concepts in the chapter are life and death, slavery and freedom. The Christian has been brought from death into life, has been delivered from bondage to sin, and is now the slave of righteousness. The chapter is very practical because it shows your students the importance of taking sin seriously and

fighting against it, and also enables them to overcome discouragement when the battle is not going very well (as often happens with teenage and adult Christians alike).

Lesson Procedure

The history of the African race in the United States has great bitterness attached to it because of the institution of slavery and the bigotry and prejudice that followed its demise. The Bible was also written during a time when slavery was common. Though this slavery was not racial in character, it was so commonplace as to be practically universal - everyone who read the Bible in the first century would have had firsthand knowledge of slavery. Because of this, it is often used as an illustration in Scripture. In the sixth chapter of Romans, Paul uses it, along with the contrast of life and death, to communicate to the Romans the difference in the Christian's relationship to sin before and after his conversion.

The reason sin is such a problem for Christians is that they are people who live in two worlds. They are already in a sense citizens of heaven, yet they continue to inhabit a sinful world. The problem is not just with the world, of course. The Christian has within himself the continuing urges to disobedience associated with the sinful nature, while at the same time he seeks to serve Christ. The people to whom Paul wrote were losing the battle with sin, and they were losing it because they had stopped fighting. They had come up with two rather peculiar answers to the bothersome voices of their consciences. We will examine those two answers, along with Paul's responses to them, in today's lesson.

1. "The more I sin, the better God looks" (verses 1-14)

Paul had just gotten finished explaining at the end of Romans 5 that the sin of man had become an occasion for God to reveal His amazing grace through the sacrifice of Christ. The Romans, however, then thought that, if sin brought out the grace of God, and thus brought glory to Him, would not more sin produce more grace, and thus more glory? This argument may sound stupid, but how often today do we at least imply the same thing? Who receives greater attention from the church at large, the notorious sinner who gives his lurid "testimony" in all its gory details, or the faithful saint who has never done anything in his life that would bring overt disgrace to the name of Christ? Unfortunately, those who lack a grossly sinful past are often made to feel less than adequate because their testimonies are so "boring." Isn't it true that what we are really doing is the same as what the Romans said - implying that God is glorified more by forgiving greater and more obvious sins?

Paul responds to this foolish argument by using the contrast between life and death. He says that one who belongs to Christ has died with Christ, and is therefore separated from sin. He does not mean by this that the Christian is perfect, but that he is no longer under the power of sin - he no longer must sin. Baptism is a beautiful picture of this, as the believer is immersed in water, symbolizing his death and burial to sin, and is brought out again a new person, alive in Christ. A believer can no more live like a sinner than a corpse can live like a man.

What does this mean in practice? Paul uses three important verbs in verses 11-13 that tell us what our attitude toward sin ought to be. In verse 11, he says to "count yourselves dead to sin." He is here talking about a state of mind. The mind plays a powerful role in our actions, and Paul indicates that a Christian must learn to think like one who is free to do right and is no longer required by his nature to do what is wrong. The Christian cannot afford to despair of the possibility of righteous living. He must confidently believe that he is able to overcome the impulses to sin that continue to dwell within him.

In verse 12, Paul says that we should not “let sin reign” in our bodies. While verse 11 spoke of an attitude of mind, this verse speaks of the will. The believer is one who steadfastly refuses to give in to sin, seeking always to align his will with the will of God. When God makes a person a new creature, his will is changed - he no longer wants the things he used to want.

The final instruction that Paul gives in this section is found in verse 13, where he says, “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin.” Having talked about the intellect and the will, he here moves on to the body itself. We are not to engage our bodies, which now belong to God, in the practice of sin. We are instead to submit our bodies totally to the service of God (Paul will have more to say about this in chapter 12). While all of this may sound terribly difficult, Paul reminds us in verse 14 that it is not by our own efforts that these things are accomplished. God has not left us alone. Instead, all this conflict with sin is carried out by God’s grace.

Paul therefore encourages Christians to resist sin, while giving them the assurance that such resistance is indeed possible because of the change that God has brought about in their lives through Christ.

2. “If I’m already saved, it doesn’t matter if I sin” (verses 15-23)

The resourceful Romans now came up with another argument to avoid fighting against sin in their lives. They thought that, since they had already been saved, why did it really matter whether they sinned or not? They wouldn’t actually try to sin, of course, but if they did, what real difference did it make? This nonchalant attitude toward sin is far more common, and in some ways far more dangerous, than the foolish argument presented at the beginning of the chapter. How many Christians today go on sinning and care little about it because they are sure that they are going to heaven? Paul punctures this attitude with another illustration, that of freedom and slavery.

Before his conversion, the Christian was a slave to sin. He had no choice but to do what his master demanded, and every thought, word, and action was directed toward the service of his father, the devil. It is not a surprising coincidence, of course, that many of these actions were also very gratifying to the sinner himself, at least in the immediate context. Paul points out that such slavery no longer exists. Christ has freed His people from bondage to sin. This does not mean, however, that the result is freedom to do whatever I want. Control by the self, as we have already noted, is closely connected with bondage to sin, and is not therefore true freedom. The only true freedom comes with another kind of bondage, namely slavery to Christ Himself. Ask your students why Paul considers this the opposite of slavery to sin, and thus the only true freedom. Why is the slave of Christ freer than the man who serves his own desires? Paul tells us that the difference lies in the results of the two paths - the one leads to disobedience and death, the other to righteousness and life. He finishes off his argument in verse 23 by indicating that the sinner gets what he has earned - death - while the believer receives the undeserved gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

It is vitally important that the foolishness of this second argument be countered in the minds of your students. Too many young people (and adults) live lives of sin and care little about it because they are convinced they are on their way to heaven. Conclude the lesson by reminding your students of Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:21-23. There are many who think they are Christians, but who really are not. It is impossible for a Christian to be careless about sin because God has given him a new heart. Therefore it is impossible for one who is careless about sin to assume justifiably that he is a Christian.

1. What were the two arguments used by the Romans in chapter six to excuse their careless attitude toward sin?

2. If, as Paul argues, the Christian is “dead to sin,” why do Christians have to struggle with sin? What does the phrase “dead to sin” mean?

3. What symbol does Paul say gives a picture of the fact that the Christian is dead to sin?

4. The argument used by Paul in Romans 6 is based on the fact that every believer is in union with Christ. How is this truth critical to Paul’s argument?

5. How is a Christian to fight sin with his mind, will, and body, according to Romans 6:11-14?

6. Why is the only man who is truly free the one who is a slave to Christ?

7. Why is death described as “wages” while eternal life is described as a “gift” by Paul in Romans 6:23?

THE LAW, THE FLESH, AND THE SPIRIT

Romans 7

Lesson Aim

To show students the roles played by the law of God and the Spirit of God in the battle against sin in the life of the Christian.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:31 - "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Lesson Background

In Romans 6, Paul told the church at Rome about the importance of struggling against sin in their lives. He refused to let them off the hook by demolishing the feeble excuses they presented for ignoring their sin. In the following chapter, Romans 7, we have perhaps the most familiar passage in Scripture concerning conflict with sin. Paul here speaks of the difficulty of the battle, and presents to the Romans (and to us) the most important weapons in that battle - the Law of God and the Spirit of God.

Paul knew he was dealing with an audience that thought very highly of the law of God. The Jewish Christians in Rome, like those throughout the empire, tended toward legalism, and thus often placed too much emphasis on obedience to the law. Paul thus begins the chapter, not by talking about the value of the law, but by showing what the law cannot accomplish, and the way in which the Christian should view himself as being separated from the law. Since he has already spoken against antinomianism (the belief that one who has been saved can live as he pleases) in the last chapter, he concerns himself here mostly with those who would put too much weight on obeying the law. The clearest presentation of this is in the latter portion of

the chapter, where he shows the dismal condition of the Christian who uses the law as his only weapon in the battle against sin. The law is important, Paul says, but is ineffective if used alone. Obedience to the law is only valuable when energized by the Spirit of God. Your students should thus be encouraged to struggle against sin, not with the hopelessness expressed in the second half of Romans 7, but in the overcoming power of the Holy Spirit.

Lesson Procedure

Open the session by asking the students why Christians who know that something is wrong do it anyway. What is it that makes a person willfully sin, even after salvation? Everyone who is a Christian is familiar with this conflict. In the seventh chapter of Romans, Paul describes the conflict and talks about the relationship between the law of God and the believer's ongoing battle with sin in his life.

1. Dead to the Law (verses 1-6)

The large Jewish community at Rome was, like the other Jews throughout the empire, enamored of the Old Testament law and its rituals. The Jewish Christians would naturally tend to define holy living in terms of that law, and this would make them feel superior to the Gentiles who did not keep the law in the same way. Those who are convinced of their own righteousness are not likely to engage in any serious struggles against sin, however, so Paul brings out in the first section of this chapter the truth that the Christian is as dead to the law as he is to sin (see chapter six).

The analogy Paul uses to make his point is one of marriage. He says that the law was like a husband to the Jews. When they violated the law, they were sinners, in the same way that a woman who is unfaithful to her husband is an adulteress (the Old Testament often refers to idolatry as spiritual adultery). If a woman's husband dies, however, she does not commit adultery if she remarries. Similarly, Paul says, the violation of the ceremonial law is no longer sin for those who are dead to the law, but alive to Christ. Please note that Paul has already made it clear at the end of chapter six that sinning carelessly is not an option for the Christian; what he is emphasizing here is that a person cannot lean on ceremonies as a basis for his battle against sin. The modern equivalent would be to say that a person may not be satisfied about his battle against sin if it consists of no more than baptism, church attendance, participation in the Lord's Supper, etc. (Paul is also saying that the ceremonial law is dead, but that is not an issue for most Christians today).

2. Condemned by the Law (verses 7-13)

You can imagine what Paul's Jewish readers would say next. They promptly accused him of subverting the law, claiming that his teaching implied that it was of no value. Paul now goes on to prove that the law has tremendous value, but that its value is exclusively negative.

He notes that the law functions in much the same way for the Jew as the Creation functions in the life of the pagan. As we saw in chapter one, the revelation of God in nature is sufficient to render the unbeliever guilty before God because he is able to know something of God through the Creation, but rejects that knowledge. Thus the natural world is sufficient to condemn, but not sufficient to save. Similarly, Paul notes here in Romans 7 that the law reveals to the Jew his sin, but does not give him the remedy for that sin. He is able to see himself for what he is, but he has no hope of change.

The condemnation provided by the law goes even beyond the area of knowledge, however. Paul also points out in verse 8 that the law actually increased his sin. We are all familiar with the terrible tendency

within all of us to test boundaries that are set out by others. Anyone who sees a WET PAINT sign feels the urge to touch the paint; ditto with KEEP OFF THE GRASS. Students test the limits set by their teachers in the classroom. In fact, the establishment of boundaries causes people to violate those boundaries. Similarly, the law set up by God not only revealed man's sin, but also drove him to sin further, thus revealing even more deeply the perversity of human nature.

Paul has therefore established that the law cannot save the unbelieving Jew, any more than nature can save the unbelieving Gentile. But this truth has value for the Christian, as well. Remember that Paul has been dealing with the Christian's conflict against sin. He has laid the groundwork here for the final truth he is trying to bring out in this chapter, namely that the Christian who seeks to fight sin by mere legal observance is doomed to frustration. In the same way that the law can do nothing but condemn the unbeliever, it can do nothing but show the believer how miserably he is failing in his battle against sin. This brings us to the famous dilemma at the end of Romans 7.

3. Frustrated by the Law (verses 14-26)

“Stop the world, I want to get off!” This is the cry of the frustrated Christian pictured by Paul in Romans 7:14-24. He wants to fight sin, he wants to do good, yet he finds himself continually doing what he knows is wrong and feeling miserable because the law he is trying to keep condemns him over and over again.

At this point, ask your students if they think what Paul describes here is the normal experience of most Christians. Is this something with which your students can identify? Is this how they usually feel? Is this how most Christians usually function? You will probably find that the experience described here is all too common among your students, their friends, and many adult Christians as well. Does Paul mean to say that this is the way things are supposed to be, that there is no escape from this frustration until we reach heaven? When he cries out, “Who will rescue me from this body of death?”, is he implying that absence from the body is the only way out?

Mercifully, Paul is not describing a hopeless situation in these verses. In verse 25, he cries out in praise, because deliverance from this depressing round of frustration is possible for the Christian through Christ. There is no reason for the Christian to live a life of defeat and frustration. It is the believer who foolishly thinks that he can win the struggle against sin by carefully obeying God's law who will be frustrated. The law is good and valuable because it tells us what God wants us to do. But it fails to reach the real center of the struggle against sin - the human heart itself. Outward obedience cannot produce inward change. Such change is only possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who gave the believer a new heart, and it is the Spirit who can work within the Christian to purge the remnants of the old nature from his life. This is, of course, a gradual process, and is not completed until we arrive in heaven, but it is the work of the Spirit, not the work of man.

Though obedience to the law of God is important, it is useless apart from the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit who gives victory where the Christian living in his own strength knows nothing but defeat and frustration. Paul thus ends this chapter, not with the wail of a frustrated man who can do nothing but wait for death, but with the happy cry of one who knows deliverance from the frustration of dominance by sin. It is this victorious work of the Holy Spirit that provides the subject for Romans 8, which we will examine next week. At that time, we will find out how Paul tells us we can win the battle against sin in our lives.

TRIUMPH IN CHRIST

Romans 8

Lesson Aim

To show students the victory over sin that Christ gives to His people through the Holy Spirit.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:32 - “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”

Lesson Background

The seventh chapter of Romans ended with a shout of victory, but without an explanation of the reason for Paul’s enthusiasm. The eighth chapter provides that reasoning, and in doing so gives the basis for the Christian’s conquest of sin in his own life. The key, of course, is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. It is the Spirit who enables the Christian to succeed where his own efforts apart from the Spirit would bring nothing but failure, as we saw in chapter seven.

Young people face many battles against sin. Though those battles do not go away with increasing maturity, experience makes the battles somewhat easier to fight. Teenagers must face both the power of peer pressure and the seductions of independence, both of which lead them often in the direction of sin. This chapter gives valuable help for the Christian who wants to be able to reject the overtures of sin in his life. Romans 8 answers three basic questions about defeating sin - who, how, and why. It tells us who gives the Christian victory over sin (the Holy Spirit), how that victory is achieved (by the Spirit’s witness, hope, and intercession), and why that victory is possible (the sovereign love of God in Christ).

It is important for the teacher to realize that the content of this chapter will be utterly foreign to the unbelievers in his class, in terms of personal experience if not conceptually. Those who are not Christians should know that any attempts on their part to “be good” will meet with hopeless frustration. Victory over sin is not possible except by the power of the Holy Spirit, who distinguishes by His indwelling between believers and unbelievers.

Lesson Procedure

Last week’s lesson ended like the chapter of a good novel - leaving the reader in suspense, eager to go on to the next chapter to find out what was going to happen. Paul had talked about the struggles with sin faced by the Christian who tried to fight the battle on his own, and things admittedly looked rather bleak and depressing. Yet the chapter ended on a note of triumph, with Paul exclaiming about the glorious victory he had found in Christ. After reviewing last week’s lesson, tell the students that Paul now is ready to unravel the mystery and tell his readers how to win the battle against sin. Like any good mystery writer, he reveals the solution by telling his readers the “who,” the “how,” and the “why.”

1. Who gives the Christian victory over sin (verses 1-11)?

We saw last week that mere effort on the part of the Christian will not bring victory over sin. Paul made it clear that “trying to be good” would do little more than increase the frustration of the Christian, who would constantly find himself doing those things he knew were wrong. If the victory over sin does not have its roots in the character of the Christian, where is it to be found?

Paul explains in these verses that such victory comes only through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who breaks the power of the sinful nature, who places new, righteous desires in the minds of believers, and who actually exercises control in the lives of Christians. This is the sort of thing Paul is talking about in Ephesians 5:18 when he tells Christians to be filled with the Spirit instead of being drunk with wine - in the same way that a drunkard is “under the influence” of alcoholic “spirits,” a Christian is controlled by the Spirit of God.

Give particular attention to the truth expressed in verse 9, where Paul makes the point that the presence of the Spirit of God is the infallible distinguisher between believers and unbelievers. The divine control of which Paul is speaking is something totally beyond the experience of non-Christians, yet is familiar to all those who know Christ.

2. How does the Spirit give victory over sin (verses 12-27)?

The basic truth that comes out of the middle section of Romans 8 is that the Holy Spirit gives the Christian something that he lacks on his own - the power to say “No!” to sin. The Spirit replaces the depressing frustration pictured by Paul at the end of Romans 7 with confidence that only He can give.

A. Confidence in who I am (verses 12-17)

The paragraph including verses 12-17 communicates one basic truth - the Christian can overcome sin because he is the child of God. As a child of God, he can put away his fear of sin and oppose it with confidence, knowing that he is on intimate terms with the God of the universe. The Holy Spirit is involved in this confidence because He is the one who gives it. It is because of the indwelling of the Spirit that the

believer can have confidence of his place in God's family. The obligation to oppose sin is consequently not a hopeless impossibility, but a task for which the Christian has been given all the power necessary.

B. Confidence in who I will be (verses 18-25)

Paul does not want us to get the wrong idea here. The Christian may have all he needs to fight sin in his life, but such a battle will not be fun, nor will it be easy. In fact, Paul speaks of this battle in terms of suffering. The present struggle should never erode the confidence of the Christian, however.

The suffering associated with fighting against sin (and other kinds of suffering as well) should never discourage the Christian for two reasons. The first is that such sufferings, though they seem severe now, are insignificant compared to what awaits the believer in heaven. The second is that such sufferings are part of a much broader plan of redemption by God. Not only do Christians suffer, but the whole created universe is experiencing the pain of being under the curse of sin and is longing for deliverance. Christians are not alone, but are part of God's great plan. This very knowledge should help in what sometimes seems like a lonely and endless battle. (Do your students ever feel like they must always stand alone against their peers? Do they feel like the battle never lets up? The encouragement of this passage - to see such things in the context of God's broader plan - should help them to view their present struggles with confidence rather than distress.)

C. Confidence of help in prayer (verses 26-27)

The Holy Spirit not only gives the Christian assurance that he is the child of God and encourages him in the struggles of life, He also helps him to pray. As any Christian knows, praying is not easy. Not only is it difficult to discipline oneself to pray with any sort of consistency, but often we don't even know what we ought to pray for! We want God's will, but we don't always know what that is.

Here, again, the Holy Spirit provides help. Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit, in some way not explained here or elsewhere in Scripture, communicates to God on our behalf in accordance with God's will. Thus the Christian can pray with confidence, knowing that his prayers are being carried by the Holy Spirit to God in such a way as to bring them into line with the will of God. (Have your students ever wondered how they ought to live rightly in a given situation? Their very puzzlement is communicated to God by the Spirit, and God is able to provide help, even when His children are not even sure what to ask for.)

3. Why does the Spirit give victory over sin (verses 28-39)?

Many Christians over the years have treasured the promise of Romans 8:28. The confidence expressed in this verse has carried many a believer through tragedy and heartache. Teenagers have their heartaches, too, though adults often underestimate their severity. Those who take little comfort from Romans 8:28 often do not understand why it is true. They often feel unworthy and doubt that God could possibly love anyone like themselves. The closing verses of Romans 8 demonstrate in powerful language the unconditional nature of the love God has for His people.

In verses 29-30, Paul tells us that God loves His children because He has chosen them. This may seem a bit circular, but it is the very circularity of the argument that makes it so comforting. God loves us because of something in Him, not because of anything in ourselves. As a result, nothing in ourselves can ever call that love into question.

Verses 31-34 give us the best possible example of God's love for His children. That, of course, is the death of Christ on their behalf. Certainly the God who sent His Son into the world to die for us would not deny lesser blessings to the same group of unworthy sinners. Not only did Jesus die for Christians, but He also now sits at God's right hand to provide intercession. Thus, the Son and Holy Spirit provide double help before the Father on behalf of believers.

Paul then concludes in verses 35-39 that nothing whatsoever is capable of destroying the Christian's relationship to his heavenly Father. Whether it be suffering in this world or the evil powers of Satan and his angels, nothing can separate a Christian from the love of God. If this is true, can anyone possibly think that God would allow sin to come between Him and His children? He has sent the Holy Spirit to keep forever secure those whom He has brought into His family.

Conclusion

Close the lesson by reminding your class that the encouragement of this chapter is only for Christians. One who does not belong to God does not have the Holy Spirit, and is thus incapable of successfully fighting sin. The only way to receive the Holy Spirit is to come to Christ. Only those who are in Christ are able to have confidence in this world, and in the world to come.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Romans 9

Lesson Aim

To communicate to students the reality of God's sovereign choice in the plan of salvation, and help them to see this as a source of joy rather than a cause for doubting God's justice.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:33 - "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies."

Lesson Background

The sovereignty of God in salvation is a major stumblingblock to many people who cherish the free will of man. Paul's presentation of it in the book of Romans is not in the context of a defense of God's justice, but rather an expansion of the marvelous love expressed at the end of chapter eight. Paul has just told the Christians at Rome that they can live confidently because God's choice of them is not based on anything in themselves, but instead is rooted in His own love as expressed in the death and resurrection of Christ. This expression of unconditional love raises a problem in the minds of his readers, however. What, they ask, about similar unconditional promises given to the nation of Israel? If God's love for Israel was turned into rejection, could not the same thing happen to Christians? Paul now attempts to show in the next three chapters that such a thing is inconceivable. In the process, he explains the true nature of God's loving choice of Israel as a nation and relates it to God's love for His children today.

It is against the background of his discussion of God's choice of Israel that the question of God's fairness is raised. At this point Paul uses the famous argument of the potter and the clay, making clear that

the sovereign Creator is free to make people for whatever purpose He chooses. Your students must be made to see that this sovereign freedom of God is a cause for rejoicing rather than sorrow. It is this freedom that underlies the great blessings discussed in Romans 8. If God had not chosen freely, but rather had conditioned His choice on the character of the person in question, the Christian would have no security, since his salvation would hinge on something in himself. The fact that God is sovereign should not be discouraging to the unbelievers in your class, either. They should realize that if their condition outside the family of God is bothersome to them, that could indicate that God is already beginning to work in their lives. We cannot see into the sovereign purposes of God, and He could be using even discussions such as this one to bring pots designed for noble uses into His kingdom.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the class by asking your students, “Why is the doctrine of election so hard for most people to accept?” They should quickly come up with the fact that it is seen by many as making people no more than puppets, denying their freedom of choice in the area of salvation, and actually making God appear to be a respecter of persons. Note then that the best responses to these arguments are to be found in Romans 9. Paul answers these very charges, but does so from a much more positive context, not the defensive shell in which Christians often find themselves hiding when dealing with this particular issue.

At the end of chapter eight, Paul had told his readers that the victory over sin enjoyed by Christians was assured by the free electing love of God for them. We saw last week that if God’s love had been conditioned upon anything in us, we would have been very insecure indeed. At this point, however, Paul’s readers had a question: If God’s love is unconditional, why was the nation of Israel set aside by God because of their unbelief? Had not they been chosen by God, just as Paul said Christians had been chosen? If Israel could be chosen and later rejected, how could Christians derive any real comfort from the fact that they had been chosen by God? Paul now goes on in chapter nine to answer these questions, and in the process responds to the charges against the justice of God that are so often raised today. We will look first at how Israel’s experience proves Paul’s point about election, then turn to his defense of God’s justice.

1. The History of Israel Proves the Unconditional Nature of Election (verses 1-13)

Paul begins the ninth chapter with his heart rather than his head. Instead of beginning with a logical argument, he starts by expressing his intense desire for the salvation of the Jewish people (verses 1-5). He enumerates the blessings that have been theirs, and even goes so far as to wish himself separated from Christ if only his people could be saved. Paul thus defuses one objection that had often been raised against him by Jews all over the empire - that he had departed from Judaism, cared nothing for the law, and had completely come over to the Gentiles.

He then gets to the real point in verse 6. His readers at this point had begun to object that the election of God could not be much of a source of assurance if God had chosen Israel, but later rejected them. Paul here seeks to establish that the rejection of Israel does not in any way undermine the electing grace of God.

Stop at this point and see if your students can figure out Paul’s argument. Why does he say that the rejection of Israel does not destroy the security of election? If they are unable to discover it, show them from verses 6-13 that God’s election never applied to people on the basis of physical descent alone, nor did it in fact depend on anything in the people themselves. In verses 6-9, Paul tells his readers that the election

distinguished between the children of the flesh and the children of promise; that Isaac was chosen, while Ishmael, who was just as much a son of Abraham, was rejected. In verses 10-13, he goes even further by using the example of Jacob and Esau. The twins had nothing to distinguish them whatever - both had the same parents, both were born at the same time, yet even before their birth, God chose Jacob and rejected Esau. Thus God's election is not related to physical descent, or to anything else! Consequently, Paul is able to argue that the vast majority of Jews who rejected the Messiah and were rejected by God were not elect in the first place, despite the fact that they were part of the "Chosen People." As a result, the rejection of the Jews does not call into question the security of the elect, since those who were rejected were never elect in the first place, and those who were elect of God have (or will) come into the kingdom, and will remain there.

2. Unconditional Election Does Not Undermine the Justice of God (verses 14-24)

Paul's readers now raise a question that is familiar to any Christian who has had discussions of any serious nature with unbelievers, or for that matter any Calvinist who has had theological discussions with someone who does not accept the doctrines of grace. The question is really more of a statement phrased as an objection - GOD IS NOT FAIR! How can a God who presents Himself as a God of love and justice arbitrarily choose to save some while rejecting others? If this choice is not based on something in the person, that makes it even worse! Paul deals with the issue in two parts, first proving that God in fact does choose arbitrarily to save some and condemn others, then defending God against the charge of unfairness.

In verses 14-18, Paul shows clearly that God deliberately chooses to condemn certain people. The example he presents is that of the Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus. Paul notes that God told Pharaoh through Moses that he had been placed on this earth to display the power of God - through his destruction! Paul does not seem to be at all reluctant to ascribe to God the hardening of Pharaoh's heart that caused the continuation of the plagues. Pharaoh was thus clearly put into this world to glorify God by his hardness and rejection of God's sovereignty, and to reveal the power of God by his own destruction. Can your students think of any other examples of people in the Bible that clearly were put into the world to glorify God by their rejection of Him and resulting condemnation (Judas is one obvious example)? If this is true in some outstanding cases in Scripture, how can we maintain that it is not true in the cases of all who reject Christ?

At this point Paul deals with the charge of unfairness leveled against God. In verses 19-24, he answers the accusation, but does not attempt to do so by developing some kind of argument harmonizing the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. He is much more blunt than that. In fact, he asserts that it takes a lot of nerve to demand from God an explanation for why He does anything. As the sovereign Creator of all things, He certainly has the right to do whatever He wants to do with the things (and people) He has made. Just like a potter who takes some clay and makes a beautiful urn that will be sitting in some museum 2000 years later, and takes another piece of clay and makes a chamber pot with it, so God has the perfect right to make some people for the purpose of glorifying Himself through their salvation, and others for the purpose of glorifying Himself through their condemnation. This may not be a very emotionally satisfying argument, but it takes seriously the fact that God is God.

It is vitally important that your students realize that truth must not necessarily be understood in order to be believed. We must not demand of God that the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man be clearly delineated in our minds before we accept the truth of the doctrine of election. In fact, to demand intellectual satisfaction prior to accepting what the Bible teaches on this issue is no different from the rejection of God set out by Paul in the first chapter of this epistle. Those who refuse to be thankful to God

for what He has done, and instead set their own ideas above His revelation of Himself, are being rebellious and are on the way to the destruction described in that first chapter.

Conclusion

We must not ignore Paul's conclusion to the chapter in verses 25-33. He brings the discussion back to his original point by using several Old Testament quotations. That point is to show election as a blessing and comfort to the people of God, which blessing is not in the least undermined by the fact that only a few Jews have turned to Christ. The glorious truth is not that God has rejected many Jews, but that He has preserved a remnant, and has incorporated into that remnant those who were not before His people - the Gentiles, who apart from the electing grace of God would have been totally lost. Your students, like Paul's readers, should be encouraged to praise God for His electing grace, not use it as an occasion to question His fairness.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE GOSPEL

Romans 10-11

Lesson Aim

To give students a vision of the triumph of the Gospel that God has determined to bring about among both Jews and Gentiles.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:34 - "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."

Lesson Background

The passage before us today is one that has produced an enormous amount of theological controversy over the years, but may be perceived by your students as having limited practical relevance. As far as the theological controversy is concerned, chapter eleven is the focal point of much discussion concerning the future of national Israel. Some maintain that God will at some future time bring ethnic Israel back to Himself, while others insist that Israel as a nation has been rejected by God, and is no longer part of God's plan in any way, shape, or form. The approach I am taking in this lesson is basically that taken by John Murray in his commentary on Romans. I will thus be treating the references to Israel in these chapters as being ethnic in nature. If you as a teacher prefer the other position, you are free, of course, to modify the lesson according to your own understanding of the passage. I should point out, however, that much of the rejection of this particular reading of Romans 11 may in my opinion be traced to an overreaction against dispensationalism; the interpretation given in this lesson has a long and honorable history, going back long before anyone ever heard of dispensationalism.

As far as the practical significance of the lesson is concerned, it lies in the promise of the triumph of the Gospel and the means by which that triumph is to be accomplished. Paul tells us here that the Gospel will spread among all peoples, and that it will do so by means of the preaching of the Word of God. Your students need to know that God has promised that those who preach the Word faithfully will bear fruit, but that such success is not an occasion for pride, but rather for thankfulness to God.

Lesson Procedure

For the purpose of review, ask your students to recall various things in the book of Romans that we have studied so far that involved the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. They should remember the “moral” Gentiles and proud Jews of chapters two and three whom Paul insisted fell short of God’s glory. They should remember the Jewish law that failed as a weapon against sin in chapter seven. In addition, they should remember from last week Paul’s way of relating the doctrine of election to the Jew-Gentile controversy in the church at Rome. This week, in chapters ten and eleven, Paul concludes his discussion of the “Jewish problem” by discussing God’s plan for the Jewish people within the context of a broader issue - that of the ultimate triumph of the Gospel in the world.

1. Preaching and the Triumph of the Gospel (chapter 10)

Paul begins the tenth chapter of Romans in much the same way that he started the ninth - with an affirmation of his loving concern for his beloved Jewish people. Have your students read verses 1-13. Ask them what the Jewish people thought made them right with God (this should come as no surprise - we have seen many times before that they were depending on their observance of the law for their salvation, and a law of their own making at that).

The first thirteen verses of Romans 10 contain six quotations from the Old Testament. Why do you think Paul quoted the Old Testament so often in this section? He is trying to show that, even in the days of the giving of the law, one could only be right with God by faith. In order to earn God’s favor by means of the law, one would have to keep it perfectly, which of course is impossible. In the same way that Paul pointed out in chapter nine that not all Jews were elect, but a remnant only, he here indicates that those who strove to keep the law did not please God, but only those who lived by faith. What makes the difference is not righteousness as defined by man, but calling “on the name of the Lord.” Paul makes it clear that the Name upon which one must call in order to be saved is none other than the name of Jesus Christ.

The second portion of chapter ten tells how people come to call on the name of the Lord. It is by means of the preaching of the Word of God that people come to know and believe in the Gospel. This does not just mean formal preaching in a church service, but speaks also of the informal proclamation of the Word in which all Christians may have a part. The emphasis, however, is placed on the official ministry of the church in spreading the Gospel (notice Paul’s comment about preachers being sent in verse 15). Though it is the preaching of the Word that is God’s intended means of spreading the Gospel, of bringing those elect ones Paul has been talking about into the kingdom of God, we should be aware of the fact that not all are going to respond to this preaching. While Paul centers on the unbelief of Israel (again using a series of quotations from the Old Testament), we realize that those who preach the Gospel today will certainly meet with varied responses on the part of their listeners. In the same way that Israel provides an example of unresponsive listeners, however, Paul holds the Gentiles up as examples of those who are changed by the preaching of the Word. Notice that they are changed, not because they are seeking the truth, but because God chooses to reveal Himself to them in the depths of their ignorance.

Your students should thus realize that those who spread the Word of God can have confidence in its success, but must understand that any success they have in presenting the Gospel to others is the result of God's sovereign work in the hearts of the listeners rather than the product of their own cleverness or eloquence. They should also learn not to get discouraged if no response is forthcoming, because the results of the preaching of the Word are in the hands of God alone.

2. Jews and Gentiles and the Triumph of the Gospel (chapter 11)

By this time it must have been difficult for Paul's readers to understand why, if the Gospel was going to triumph throughout the world through the preaching of Christians, that the Jewish people seemed to be responding in such small numbers, especially after having been chosen by God for His special purposes in the Old Testament. Paul answers that implied question in chapter eleven by talking about how the rejection of the Jews would actually enhance the spread of the Gospel. He makes this clear through the following argument.

A. The rejection of Israel is more apparent than real (verses 1-10)

Paul compares the state of Israel at the time he was writing to their condition in the time of the wicked king Ahab. Though Elijah was convinced that he was the only follower of God left in the whole country, God told him that there were seven thousand more that he didn't even know about. Though God had chosen to harden the majority of Israelites, He had saved a few by His grace, and these were a sign that He was continuing to be faithful to His covenant with Israel.

B. The temporary rejection of Israel is God's way of showing mercy to the Gentiles (verses 11-24)

Paul argues in this section that the salvation of the Gentiles is a result of the temporary rejection of the Jews. How can this be? Remind the students that it was in reaction to the Jewish rejection of the Messiah that Jesus threatened to take the kingdom away from the Jews and give it to a nation bringing forth fruits appropriate to repentance. In a sense, we may say that the Jews' loss was the Gentiles' gain. Paul will not permit the Gentiles to take pride in this, of course, since the salvation of the Gentiles was completely a matter of grace, not in any way deserved by them. Draw a tree on the board to help explain to your students what Paul is saying in this section about the roots surviving after the branches have been cut off, then having new branches grafted into the old trunk. Be sure they understand that this "cutting off" is not talking about a person losing his or her salvation (this would completely contradict the entire thrust of chapter eight), but about the status of a group of people as presently enjoying or not enjoying the favor of God.

C. The spreading of the Gospel among the Gentiles is God's way of showing mercy to Israel (verses 25-32)

In the same way that God used Israel in an indirect sort of way to bring His grace to the Gentiles, so He intends to use the Gentiles to bring His grace back to Israel again. This grace is to come in two ways. One is by the preaching of the Word, as indicated in chapter ten. The second is through jealousy - as the Jews see the Gentiles enjoying God's favor, they will be moved to turn to God themselves. We have not as yet seen this occurring on any large scale, but God here promises that some day His grace will be given to the Jews on the same magnificent scale in which it has already been shown to the Gentiles. God does not break His promises, and the greatest example of His faithfulness will be the final fulfillment of His covenant with the Jewish people, when He brings them out of darkness and into the marvelous light of His Gospel.

Conclusion

After presenting such a tremendous picture of the saving grace of God, what else can Paul do but break out in a song of praise (verses 33-36)? Indeed, who but God could ever have thought of and executed such a marvelous plan of salvation? In the same way that Paul closes in praise, so should your class. Have the students take time at the end of the class to pray, thanking God for His work of salvation in Christ, and praying that the spread of the Gospel that He has promised would continue and increase throughout the world, among Jews and Gentiles alike.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

THE TRIUMPH OF THE GOSPEL

1. Why did the Jews mistakenly think they were right with God?
2. How did Paul show that salvation was by faith in the Old Testament?
3. How does God intend to bring about the triumph of the Gospel in the world?
4. How did Paul say that the setting aside of the Jews led to the salvation of the Gentiles?
5. How was the salvation of the Gentiles to bring about the return to God of the Jews?
6. Why should the person who is trying to preach the Gospel not be discouraged if people reject it and not be proud if people respond to it?

CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Romans 12

Lesson Aim

To impress upon students that the appropriate response to the grace of God is willing service to Him.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:35 - "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?"

Lesson Background

Having spent nine weeks covering the eleven chapters of Romans that deal primarily with doctrinal matters, we now arrive at the practical section of the book. This is not to say, of course, that the entire book is not practical, but in these closing chapters Paul concentrates on the application of the doctrine he has already expounded. It is the glorious plan of salvation that provides the basis for the twelfth chapter. Paul has ended chapter eleven with a hymn of praise, and now notes that verbal praise is not the only appropriate response to God's grace. One who has been saved by the grace of God should dedicate himself to the service of God. This is the theme of Romans 12. Paul expounds that theme in terms that have become very familiar to most Christians.

The chapter divides very neatly into two sections following Paul's introductory statement of his theme in verses one and two. The first section (verses 3-13) deals with service for God in the church, while the second (verses 14-21) refers more to service for God in the world at large. The introduction and two major sections correspond very nicely to the three major tasks of the church - worship, edification, and

witness. Your students should see that all of these tasks are part of the Christian's response of gratitude to the grace of God in his life and are not to be viewed as burdensome duties or unpleasant requirements.

Lesson Procedure

Start the lesson by asking your students to define the term "worship." They will probably come up with all sorts of ideas associated with the formal worship of the church and private devotional exercises. Suggest to them that, in a sense, all that a Christian does is to be worship to God. Have them then turn to Romans 12.

Remind the class that, in the Bible, doctrine is never separated from life - there is no instruction apart from application. Paul has given eleven chapters worth of instruction to the Romans, and he is now ready to talk about the practical significance of that instruction. The response of Paul to the amazing grace of God in salvation at the end of chapter eleven was a hymn of praise. He now tells the Roman church that this praise to God must not just be verbal, but must carry over into every area of life. Note that the chapter falls neatly into three sections, dealing with the Christian's response to salvation in relation to God, the church, and the world. In reality, the first two verses express the theme that the rest of the chapter expounds. In other words, the way the Christian acts toward the church (other believers) and the world (unbelievers) depends on his worship of God.

1. The Theme - The Worship of God (verses 1-2)

These very familiar verses make the point that the only logical response to the wonderful salvation that God has given to His people is one of total commitment. Ask your class what Paul means when he talks about Christians being living sacrifices. They should be able to discover that, since a sacrifice gives up his life in death (as did Jesus), Paul is saying that the Christian is to give up his life to God while continuing to live in this world. This total commitment is described by Paul as worship - a broad term that should characterize every aspect of the Christian's life. One who has given himself completely to God does everything for the purpose of honoring Him.

It is important to notice that Paul is not talking about exceptional Christians here. He is not saying that only the elite among believers, those who are specially gifted, or those who enter full-time service are to give themselves as living sacrifices. Anyone who calls himself a Christian should have the desire to do what Paul is describing here.

In verse two, Paul connects the commitment he is describing to two significant ideas. First of all, he notes that such commitment requires no longer conforming to the world around us. Conformity is highly prized by most societies, and no more so than by teenagers. Yet your students need to realize that part of being a living sacrifice is giving up the desire to conform to the world around them. Discuss for a few minutes the ways in which commitment to God requires that a person be different from the world (standards of dress, entertainment, music, use of time, etc.).

Secondly, Paul tells his readers that there is a connection between commitment to Christ and knowing God's will. Many teens struggle with the concept of knowing the will of God, particularly as it relates to such major decisions as colleges, jobs, and spouses. They must realize that they cannot expect to know the will of God unless they are the living sacrifices Paul describes.

2. Worship in the Church - The Edification of Christians (verses 3-13)

Being a living sacrifice has certain implications for a person's relationship to other Christians. In these verses, Paul points out that the worship of God involves service to other believers. He starts by making the very crucial point that being a living sacrifice requires humility. One who has given himself to God does not have an unrealistically high view of his own abilities. He knows that whatever he is, he is by the grace of God, and therefore he deserves no credit for what he is or does. Such humility allows him to give himself in the service of others with a joyful heart.

Paul then uses the picture of the Body that he expands upon so beautifully in I Corinthians 12. He notes that it is not just the Christian who is a living sacrifice, but also the church as a whole, and that this Body that has been given over to God ought to minister to itself. He then goes on to show that, just like the different parts of the human body have different functions, so do the different members of the church. When he then moves on to talk about the variety of spiritual gifts within the Body, he does not expound on the use of those gifts, but instead concentrates on the attitudes with which those gifts are to be exercised. He talks about things like diligence, cheerfulness, and generosity, noting that these are the kinds of attitudes that make the exercise of gifts profitable in the church. As Paul explains much more fully to the Corinthians, gifts are of little value if they are not accompanied by godly attitudes.

The result of all of this mutual ministry described by Paul in these verses will be edification. Make sure your students know what this word means. They must understand that part of a Christian's commitment to God involves building up the other Christians around him by the exercise of the gifts God has graciously given to him.

Paul concludes this section with a series of brief instructions about further characteristics that Christians should display in their relationships with one another. He includes sincerity, holiness, love, respect, zeal, joy, faithfulness, patience, generosity, and hospitality. Spend a few minutes with your class discussing how each of these involves worship of God, and how each can be used by God to build up the church and its members.

3. Worship in the World - Witness to Unbelievers (verses 14-21)

Paul finishes up the chapter by telling his readers that the worship of God, acting as living sacrifices, also involves the way a person functions in the world at large. He again lists a series of brief instructions, which need brief discussion on our part.

In verse 14, he says that part of being a living sacrifice involves having a gracious and forgiving attitude toward those who mock us because of our faith. The Christian does not return in kind the world's viciousness.

Verse 15 talks about what modern psychologists call "empathy." The Christian is to reach out to those who are sorrowing and share their sorrow, while genuinely rejoicing when someone else is honored or prospers (unlike the bitter elder brother in Luke 15:25-32).

The "living in harmony" of verse 16 is naturally associated with humility and willingness to ignore social distinctions. Today, that would include taking no account of differences relating to economic status, family background, or race in your relationships with your neighbors and classmates at school.

In verse 17, Paul notes that the Christian can never use the excuse, “Everybody’s doing it.” He must do right even when all around him are doing wrong, especially if the wrong is being done to him. A Christian’s reputation in the community is a vital part of his witness.

Verses 18 and 19 make the point that peace is not always possible (some people will make trouble no matter what you do), but the Christian should make sure that he has done everything he can do to live at peace with those around him. One very important aspect of this is the absolute refusal to take revenge on anyone at any time, recognizing that repayment for evil is a job that belongs to God.

The last two verses of the chapter may seem rather unusual, but they tell us that the best way to “fight back” against evil is to combat it with acts of kindness. In what sense is this like “heaping burning coals” on the head of your enemies? How can such behavior be a powerful witness to others, as well as an act of worship to God?

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by returning to the first two verses of the chapter and reminding your students of the reason behind Paul’s instruction that Christians should be living sacrifices. They should have impressed upon them the gratitude they owe to God as a result of their salvation. Be sure also to point out to the non-Christians in your class the impossibility of carrying out the behavior described in this chapter apart from the grace of God.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

CHRISTIAN SERVICE

1. What does Paul mean when he says Christians should offer their bodies to God as living sacrifices?
2. In what sense is everything a Christian does to be an act of worship?
3. Why cannot one who is a living sacrifice be conformed to the world around him?
4. Why does Paul emphasize so strongly the attitudes with which Christians exercise their gifts in the church?
5. What is edification? How should a Christian engage in this work?
6. Why is it important for a Christian to have a good reputation in the world?
7. Why does Paul say that being kind to an enemy is like “heaping burning coals on his head”?

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE WORLD

Romans 13

Lesson Aim

To show your students how Christians ought to conduct themselves in the world, particularly with regard to their attitude toward government.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:36 - “As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’”

Lesson Background

In Romans 12, Paul talked about worshiping God in all that we do, and finished the chapter by noting that the true worship of God required loving, peaceable behavior toward all men. In chapter thirteen, he expands that idea by giving it particular application to a Christian’s relationship to secular governments. The teaching given by Paul in this chapter has far-reaching implications for many areas of a Christian’s life, including several social issues that are matters of current controversy. Romans 13:1-6 has a bearing on questions such as civil disobedience, protest, war, revolution, and capital punishment (the state’s use of “the sword”). Verses seven and eight raise the issues of paying taxes and getting into debt.

It is often mentioned that these verses were penned by Paul during the reign of the wicked emperor Nero, the implication being that, if Nero, that great persecutor of the church, was to be obeyed, how much more should any secular ruler today be obeyed. The situation is not quite that simple, however. The fact of the matter is that Nero, in the early years of his reign, was considered a rather good emperor (Romans was written in the third year of Nero’s reign). He was still a teenager, and trusted the advice of the philosopher Seneca, Burrus, who was the captain of the Praetorian Guard, and his mother Agrippina. It was not until

later, after the deaths of Seneca and Burrus, that Nero had his mother murdered (he saw her as a threat to his throne) and really went off the deep end. Even though Paul wrote the words of Romans 13 during a time of good rule, however, we know that he submitted to evil rulers as well. When he appealed to Caesar during his imprisonment in Caesarea, the Caesar to whom he appealed was the brutal Nero so familiar to students of the period. It is therefore safe to maintain that Paul would have written the same words had even the insane Caligula been on the throne at the time of his writing.

One further historical note would be appropriate at this point. It was the last two verses of this chapter that God used in the conversion of the great church father Augustine in the latter part of the fourth century. Augustine had been an immoral profligate, bringing great grief to his Christian mother, who had nonetheless continued to pray for her wayward son. One day, while walking in a garden, he saw a scroll opened to Romans 13:13-14. Upon reading these words, his conscience was smitten, and he gave his life to Christ. He later went on to become one of the most influential teachers and writers in the history of the church.

In the course of today's lesson, we will concentrate largely on the principles brought up by Paul in this chapter, although we will have the opportunity to introduce some of the areas of specific application mentioned above. Full treatment of these questions would require both more time and the consultation of other passages of Scripture.

Lesson Procedure

Start today's lesson by raising the following questions in a rhetorical fashion: Is it ever right for a Christian to disobey the government? If the government declares war on another country, is the Christian responsible to help in the war effort, even if it means fighting on the front lines and killing people, perhaps Christians, from other countries? Is it ever right to overthrow an evil ruler? Does the government have the right to take the life of a criminal? Can a Christian participate in a tax protest, refusing to pay a portion of taxes that go to pay for some objectionable activity? Is it ever right for a Christian to go into debt? These clearly are very controversial issues, but they are not matters upon which the Bible is silent. The principles we need to resolve tough issues such as these are found in Scripture, and one of the places where such principles are found is in Romans 13.

At this point, review briefly the material covered last week from chapter twelve. Emphasize particularly the fact that a Christian is to be a living sacrifice, committed to doing the will of God in every area of life. At the end of Romans 12, we saw how this relates to our dealings with unbelievers. Paul now expands this concept in chapter 13, giving special emphasis to the Christian's relationship to government. At the end of the chapter, he then returns to the theme of love for our neighbor.

1. Submission to the Government (verses 1-7)

Have your students go through this section verse by verse and list the principles found in it that support Paul's basic teaching that a Christian is responsible to obey the government. They should be able to pick up the following ideas:

- Verse one clearly teaches that secular governments have been established by God. Because God has put them in power, they are to be obeyed. This does not mean, of course, that everything the government does is approved by God.

- Verse two points out that the person who rebels against the government is rebelling against God, who is the real authority. In the same way that children are to obey parents because God says so and slaves are to obey masters as if they were obeying God, so citizens are to submit to the government as if to God. This does not mean, however, that the state is to be blindly obeyed. What incidents can your students think of where Christians in the Bible legitimately disobeyed the governments under which they were living (Daniel 6 and Acts 4 are obvious examples)? Point out briefly that such disobedience is permissible only when the command of God and the command of the state come into conflict.
- The third and fourth verses mention that the state has the responsibility, delegated by God, to reward the good and punish the evil. This basic principle has implications in many areas. Does this responsibility extend to the taking of human life (capital punishment)? Does this responsibility to punish evil extend outside the borders of the country (war)? Does the government disqualify itself as legitimate if it ceases to punish evil and begins instead to punish the good (persecution of believers)? These questions obviously cannot be given full treatment in the time before us, but note that biblical examples elsewhere show the state punishing criminals and going to war against the wicked, but nowhere show Christians refusing to submit to wicked rulers.
- Verse five indicates that Christians therefore have two reasons to submit to government. These include the fear of punishment for doing wrong and the need to keep a clear conscience before God. Notice that the second reason given here means that it is necessary for a Christian to obey even if he knows he will never be caught or punished for doing wrong. What are some good examples of temptations Christians face in this area? Teenagers, certainly, have to deal with things like traffic violations (speeding), illegal drugs (even supposedly “harmless” ones like pot), and disobedience against such lesser authorities such as school principals and teachers.
- Another area where the temptation to disobey government is great is that of paying taxes, to which Paul refers in verses six and seven. A Christian may not excuse cheating on income taxes by saying that everybody does it or by thinking that he will never be caught. God knows, and that is the best reason for not doing it. Paul adds at the end of verse seven that the government is not only to be obeyed, it is also to be respected - an attitude that is certainly not encouraged by our cynical media or our individualistic culture.

Close this section of the lesson by reminding the students of the political situation that existed at the time Paul wrote these words. Use the material from the Lesson Background to show them that Paul was not only talking about good governments when he spoke of the Christian duty to obey and respect those in authority.

2. Love for the Neighbor (verses 8-14)

In the last half of the chapter, Paul returns to the theme of love about which he spoke in chapter twelve. His transition thought is the idea of debt. In verse 8, he says that the Christian should not only stay out of debt to the government by paying taxes, but should also stay out of debt to other people. We should owe others nothing but love. The practical implications of this are not always easy, especially in our age of easy credit terms. While some have taken this to mean that a Christian should never buy anything on credit (this would make it almost impossible for anyone to own a house or even a car, for instance), others have suggested that, in our culture, a better interpretation would be that a Christian should pay his obligations on time and in full. In other words, if you have a mortgage on your house, pay your bills on time. At the very least, this verse tells us that a Christian is to be a good testimony before the world by means of his financial accountability. Too many individual Christians, churches, and other Christian organizations give Christ a

bad name because they do not keep up with their bills. Our only ongoing obligation should be to show love to our neighbors. Paul amplifies this point by restating what Jesus told His questioners on several occasions - that the law could be summed up by the requirements to love God and love your neighbor.

Paul concludes the chapter by pointing out the urgency of the kind of Christian testimony he has just been describing. The strength of Paul's argument is not reduced by the fact that it was written almost two thousand years ago. Paul knew that the Lord could return at any time, and the same is true today. Whether the return of Christ is near or far, there is no question that "our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed." The possible end of history at any time should motivate those who are Christians to present to the world the clearest possible picture of the Lord Jesus through lives of love for others. At this point, share the example of Augustine from the Lesson Background. If the urgency of the situation was enough to motivate him to give himself to Christ over 1500 years ago, how much more should it motivate us today? The looseness of our age is no greater than that in which Augustine lived, and as he did, we must see the importance of living in a way distinct from the immorality of the world around us.

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by noting that, while some of the issues raised today are of interest and have considerable application, the main issue remains that of living a good testimony before the world. The unbelievers in your class need to be reminded that the imminence of Christ's return creates for them an even greater urgency, that being the need to get right with God by repenting as Augustine did.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE WORLD

1. List the reasons Paul gives for why a Christian should obey the government in Romans 13:1-5.
2. What was the political situation at the time Paul wrote these words?
3. Does the fact that God has established the government mean that the government is always right or that God approves of everything the government does?
4. Why should a Christian obey the government even in small things where he is unlikely to get caught?
5. Why should the fact that Christ could come at any time motivate Christians to live lives of love toward others?
6. How is Romans 13:13-14 an application of the doctrine found in Romans 6?

LOVE AND LIBERTY

Romans 14

Lesson Aim

To help students understand the principles involved in the exercise of Christian liberty in the context of love for other believers.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:37 - "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."

Lesson Background

The whole area of Christian liberty is a very difficult one for young people to deal with. Many in fundamentalist circles struggle with this because of the legalism that is so prevalent among them. Though Reformed churches generally pride themselves on handling this whole issue more biblically, we have our own kinds of legalism (with regard to the Sabbath, for instance) that make consideration of this chapter just as important to us as it is to others.

The matter of Christian liberty is especially crucial for young people because they have difficulty distinguishing between liberty and license (this is not to suggest that adults do not, of course). While we must oppose legalism by emphasizing the freedom of God's children, we must also stress the importance of self-control that is motivated by love for others. Christians have the responsibility to act charitably toward others, not only by tolerating differences in areas of liberty, but also by refraining from certain kinds of behavior, even though they may be right, for the benefit of some weaker brother.

As a matter of background, the main issue that brought about Paul's treatment of this subject of Christian liberty in Romans 14 was the matter of eating meat sacrificed to idols. Some Christians had no scruples about buying and eating the cut-rate meat offered in the marketplace after it had been used in temple rituals. Some even joined their non-Christian friends in feasts (presumably community get-togethers) in the idol temples themselves. Other Christians, however (probably those who had recently been converted from idolatry, or those Jews who continued to follow the dietary laws of the Old Testament), were scandalized by the very thought of eating anything associated in any way with idolatrous worship. Both groups had bad attitudes. The liberty advocates thought their brethren were squeamish and legalistic, while the stricter brothers thought of the others as libertines.

The main emphasis for your students should be in the area of right attitudes toward others rather than the resolution of specific liberty issues. We will, however, in seeking to develop a basis for this discussion of attitudes, use the specific example of alcoholic beverages, one that is a serious question in our society for Christians and non-Christians alike.

Lesson Procedure

Start the class by asking your students to list various ethical questions about which Christians today disagree and about which the Bible does not speak directly. They may come up with such matters as social dancing, styles of clothing, types of music, smoking, mixed bathing (this is a rather old one except in some parts of the country), etc. Then raise the following question: "If the Bible does not speak about these matters, how are we to know what is right and what is wrong?" This question is especially important because some Christians have created considerable disunity in the church by taking strong stands on some of these issues, insisting that their position was the only right one.

Tell your class that at the time when Paul wrote to the Romans, an issue existed very much like these that was having a divisive influence in the church, namely the question of eating meat offered to idols. Summarize for the students the basic problem as explained in the Lesson Background. Although we do not have to worry about the problem of meat offered to idols today, the way Paul handles the issue can be very helpful to us. Have the class read Romans 14, then note that the problem before us can be handled by looking at a series of questions.

1. What kinds of issues are covered by this chapter?

Ask the students if the kind of tolerance advocated by Paul in this chapter is to be our attitude toward all issues on which people differ. If it is not, how do we determine whether we are to be tolerant or strict? The matter is solved for us by Paul in verse 14. He notes that we are here dealing with a type of behavior that is right in itself, but that has the potential to cause harm or offense. Therefore, it would be inappropriate to apply the principles of Romans 14 (or I Corinthians 8, which deals with the same issue) to anything that is itself condemned in Scripture (premarital sex, for instance).

2. What does Paul mean when he talks about strong and weak brothers?

Ask your students which of the two groups Paul calls weak, the ones who steadfastly refuse to have anything to do with meat from the idol temples or those Christians who see nothing wrong with eating it. Quite unlike the attitude often characteristic of Christians today, Paul insists that the strong ones are the ones who can participate in the activity with no qualms of conscience, while the ones who have scruples about it are weak.

Why are the strong and weak brothers classified in this way? The strong are those who understand God's requirements, and thus are not hampered by unnecessary legalism. They place no requirements upon themselves beyond what is demanded by God. The weak, on the other hand, need extra laws to hold them up in their spirituality. They are so unsteady that any contact with this "tainted" meat would sway them in the direction of idolatry. Their consciences, in short, are hyperactive.

3. What attitudes shown by the strong and weak brothers does Paul condemn?

These wrong attitudes are summed up in verse three. The strong brothers, while having the right attitude toward the behavior in question, looked down their noses at their weaker brothers, despising them for their lack of spiritual fortitude. They sneered at their legalism, unable to understand why anyone would be bothered by such an innocent thing as eating meat that came from the temples.

The weak brothers, on the other hand, were scandalized by the audacity of the stronger brothers. They could not understand how anyone could associate himself with the polluted world of the idol worshipers in this way and at the same time claim to be a child of God. They felt that the strong brothers were truly sinning in their behavior.

4. Why does Paul say that the Romans should not condemn one another over issues such as this?

Many reasons are given in answer to this question. Note the following:

- In verse three, Paul says that a man who has been accepted by God is not to be rejected by a fellow believer. Apparently, the division among the Romans was so strong that the two groups were accusing one another of not even being Christians.
- In verse four, Paul notes that issues such as these are subject to the judgment of God, not men. Since God does not give us specific revelation on such questions, we are not to be dogmatic, but allow God to be the final judge.
- Verses six through eight make the point that the differing behavior is being carried out with the intention of glorifying God. This is not to say that all things that people do with the intention of glorifying God are right, but it does say something about the rightness of the motives of the people involved in this dispute.
- Verse twelve tells us that we are all personally accountable to God. We are to worry about ourselves in these areas, not about others.

5. What is a stumblingblock, and why should we avoid putting them in the paths of others?

In the second half of the chapter (verses 13-23), Paul talks about the way Christians should behave toward one another in relationship to these matters. He talks about the importance of not setting a stumblingblock in the path of another Christian. A stumblingblock is something that causes someone else to sin (the word used frequently in the King James Version, "offend," is misleading; Paul is not saying that we should stop doing anything that bothers another believer).

How can a Christian cause his brother to sin in matters such as those raised in Romans 14? He certainly could put pressure on his weaker brother that would lead him to violate his conscience. Paul makes it clear that, even if a certain type of behavior is not sinful, one who does it thinking it is sinful thereby sins. This is true because, when confronted with something that he considers to be wrong, he has done it anyway, thus disobeying what he thinks are God's requirements for his life. Consequently, it is not his behavior that is sinful, but his motive, which is one of rebellion against what he considers to be the will of God.

6. What are the basic principles governing a Christian's behavior with regard to these issues?

Verses fifteen and eighteen set forth the basic principles that are to govern our behavior in these areas. Everything we do in relation to other Christians is to be done with the concepts of love, peace, and edification in mind. Because we love others in the body of Christ, we will not do anything that would cause them to sin, even if this means refraining from behavior that we know to be acceptable. Because we desire peace, we will tolerate the ideas of others on some of these issues, even if we think they are rather strange. Because we want to edify others, we will discuss these questions openly with the desire of gaining better understanding and helping others, along with ourselves, to act in greater obedience to God. When these things are kept in mind, the unity of the church will be greatly enhanced.

7. What are some issues today where these principles can be put into practice?

As I mentioned in the Lesson Background, I think one of the best examples of the kind of issue Paul deals with in Romans 14 in our culture today is the question of alcoholic beverages. While Scripture makes it clear that wine is a gift from God and is not evil in itself, it has been subject to so much abuse in our culture that many Christians feel that the only way to honor God is to abstain totally from alcoholic beverages. Others, of course, disagree, thinking that anyone who insists on total abstinence is being overly legalistic. Talk with your students about how the principles of Romans 14 apply to the question of alcoholic beverages, emphasizing the principles of love, peace, and edification. [If you would prefer, use some other issue that is of more immediate concern to your students; one possible example would be details of Sabbath observance, which Paul himself mentions in Romans 14:5-6.]

1. What kind of moral questions may rightly be considered using the principles of Romans 14?

2. Who were the strong and weak brothers referred to by Paul in Romans 14?

3. Why did the strong and weak brothers have bad attitudes toward each other?

4. Why was the question of meat sacrificed to idols such a controversial issue in first-century Rome?

5. What is a stumblingblock? How can a person place a stumblingblock before another Christian?

6. Why does a person who does something he thinks is wrong sin, even if the thing he does is not really wrong?

7. What are some issues in the church today that should be handled using the principles of Romans 14?

CONCLUSION

Romans 15-16

Lesson Aim

To review the book of Romans and help the students understand the way in which Paul put the teachings of the book into practice in his own life.

Memory Verse

Romans 8:38-39 - "For I am convinced that neither death nor 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."

Lesson Background

We arrive this week at our final study in the book of Romans. The chapters we are to cover today, chapters fifteen and sixteen, serve as a fitting conclusion to our study. In them, Paul sums up what he has been trying to get across throughout the book, then speaks of his own ministry and sends greetings to his friends and acquaintances in the church at Rome.

For us, these chapters will serve as a good review. The major applications of the book are brought out again by Paul at the beginning of chapter fifteen, where he speaks of living in love toward the brethren and especially of the need for unity among Jews and Gentiles. When he then goes on to discuss the state of his own ministry in the second part of the chapter, what he says serves as a beautiful illustration of the very virtues he is attempting to encourage in the Romans.

The book concludes, as do most of Paul's letters, with a list of greetings. The puzzling thing about this list, of course, is that at this point Paul had never been to Rome. How then does he know so many people in the church? Several suggestions may help us to understand this lengthy list somewhat better. First of all, it may be helpful to note that it was at Corinth, from which Paul wrote this letter, that he met Aquila and Priscilla, who had earlier come from Rome. They would have been able to describe the state of the congregation there, and would know if the church in Rome included any whom had met Paul personally. Paul would thus know from them whom to greet. His obvious personal acquaintance with a large number of the Christians in the city can also be explained. Any of the ones listed who were Jewish had probably often traveled to Jerusalem for the feast days, as Paul himself had done. Gentiles could have been encountered in any one of the many cities in which Paul had ministered. Probably quite a few of the Christians in Rome had moved there from other cities around the empire, where they might have met the Apostle Paul.

It is also interesting to note that the bearer of the letter was a woman, Phoebe, who was a member of the church in Cenchrea, the port city near Corinth. The description of her as a "servant" (literally "deacon") has been the source of some controversy, but the text does not require that the term be considered an official title. The other character of interest is Tertius, mentioned in verse 22. Paul's physical infirmity, whatever it was, apparently required him to dictate his letters. Tertius had served as his secretary in the writing of this one, and includes his greetings to the church at Rome in the closing verses.

As you are going through this lesson, use it as an occasion to review the material from the quarter. Emphasize especially the need for love and unity in the church and the way in which the doctrinal foundation set forth by this letter naturally leads to such a state.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by asking your students to state in one sentence the key theme of the book of Romans. As we noted at the beginning of our study, the theme involves the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the good news of salvation. But what is the major application of that theme upon which Paul focuses? We have spent the last three weeks studying the application section of the book. See if your students can sum up what Paul considers to be the most crucial application of the good news of the Gospel presented in the doctrinal section. Hopefully, they will be able to discern that the thread running through the last three chapters has been that of love for others. Whether in the edification of fellow believers through exercising gifts or tolerating differences, or whether through being a witness to the world by submitting to authority, the Christian is to be a person who lives in love toward others.

The first part of the lesson should be devoted to connecting the doctrinal portion of the book to this fundamental application emphasized by Paul. How does Paul conclude that Christians should show love to all and live in unity with one another because of what he has explained in the first eleven chapters of Romans? Review the chapters with your class, lesson by lesson, giving an overview of the book that shows its inherent logic.

The first three chapters proved without question that all were sinners and guilty before God, having no excuse for their rebellion against Him. The importance of this truth for the application made by Paul is that all are essentially the same in their lack of righteousness and need of grace. There is no room for pride on the part of the Christian, either in relationship to unbelievers or by comparison with other Christians.

In chapters four and five, Paul talks about the marvelous grace of God in salvation, showing how the righteousness of Christ was imputed to His people through His death on their behalf. This contributes to

Paul's eventual application because, if Christ died for His people, they are then dead to themselves and alive only in Him. They must therefore commit themselves wholly to Him in their actions and attitudes.

Chapters six through eight talk about the Christian's conflict with sin, and the defeat that comes from fighting the battle alone is contrasted with the victory provided by the indwelling Spirit of God. Thus the love and unity which Paul advocates, though not at all natural reactions for sinful human beings, are possible because of the indwelling Spirit.

The sovereignty of God in the spread of the Gospel among Jews and Gentiles is the theme of chapters nine through eleven, and these again show that God has a plan in which all of His people are involved. Showing love to unbelievers is a way in which the Gospel is communicated, and the unity of God's people has been designed by God to contribute to the witness of the church throughout the world.

The application chapters bring these things out clearly. In chapter twelve, Paul talks about commitment to Christ leading to edification of believers and living at peace in the world. The latter is then expanded in chapter thirteen to show the Christian's relationship to a secular government, and to unbelievers in general. Chapter fourteen then turns back to the issue of unity in the church, and instead of talking about Jews and Gentiles here, Paul talks about the conflict between the strong and the weak in areas of Christian liberty (actually, these two are related, since it is largely the Jewish members of the congregation who would have had overly sensitive consciences in matters of diet and feast days and would have been scandalized by the lack of concern of the Gentiles for these things). It is love above all that is able to overcome these conflicts.

We are now ready to turn briefly to the closing chapters of the book of Romans.

1. Summary of Key Principles (15:1-13)

Paul uses the opening verses of chapter fifteen to reemphasize the importance of love and unity in the church. In doing so he returns to the need for the strong and weak to accept one another in love, and for Jews and Gentiles to acknowledge their unity in Christ. As he had done earlier in the book, he buttresses his argument about the unity of Jews and Gentiles with several quotations from the Old Testament. Verse seven is especially important: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." Paul brings together the idea that God's grace is to motivate our gracious treatment of one another and the truth that the Christian's highest purpose is to glorify the God who has purchased him for His special possession. Thus he encourages the Christians in Rome to love one another, both because God has shown love to them and because they want to glorify God.

2. The Example of Paul Himself (15:14-33)

Paul now speaks of his own ministry and his plans for the future, but we should notice that in this section he illustrates by his own example the very principles he has been exhorting the Romans to follow. In these verses, he does everything he can to build up and encourage the Christians in Rome. Instead of taking a parting shot at their divisions and party spirit, he speaks highly of their devotion to God. He also does his best to see that God gets all the glory for what he has accomplished in his ministry. Instead of speaking in glowing terms of the success his preaching has enjoyed, he minimizes his own contribution and speaks only of what God has done.

As a passing note, it might be interesting for your students to know that Paul's visit to Rome did not exactly come off as he had planned. Instead of stopping for a visit in Rome on the way to a preaching tour

of Spain, Paul went from Jerusalem to Rome in chains after spending several years in prison in Caesarea. God wanted Paul to visit Rome, but didn't work it out in quite the way Paul expected.

We should also note that Paul's own life was an example of what he taught concerning the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church. The reason he was going to Jerusalem was to deliver money that had been collected from the largely Gentile churches of Greece and Asia Minor for the benefit of the famine-stricken Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. He worked hard for the very unity that he was trying to encourage in others.

3. Closing Greetings (16:1-27)

It is easy to skip over the closing greetings when reading one of the epistles of Paul. We should not do this, however, because these closing verses continue to illustrate the same truths that Paul has been emphasizing throughout the book. Notice the following:

Paul mentions a long list of people in a church he had never visited. He probably wrote down the names of just about everybody he knew in the church, knowing that each one would be encouraged by the mere fact that his or her name had been mentioned. He also manages to say something complimentary about everyone he mentions, despite the fact that he probably didn't know some of them very well. This kind of mutual encouragement is exactly what he was trying to get the Romans to show toward one another. Paul is equally generous toward his companions in Corinth, mentioning no less than eight men in his greetings to the Roman Christians.

The concluding verses of the book again touch on some of the great themes of the Gospel. He speaks of the good news that had come through the preaching of Jesus Christ, how it ties in with the past revelation that had been given by God, and how it will surely spread throughout the world among all nations. Amen.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

CONCLUSION

On the basis of your study this quarter, construct an outline of the book of Romans. Under each sub-point of the outline, write your own thoughts about what Paul's teaching in this section means for your own life. Be specific. Remember that doctrine is intended to be practical. The following skeleton should help to get you started. Add your own sub-points under each of the main headings.

INTRODUCTION (Romans 1:1-17)

I. INSTRUCTION (Romans 1:18-11:36)

A. ALL ARE SINNERS (Romans 1:18-3:20)

B. GOD IN CHRIST HAS BROUGHT SALVATION (Romans 3:21-5:21)

C. SALVATION BRINGS VICTORY OVER SIN (Romans 6-8)

D. SALVATION IS A SOVEREIGN WORK OF GOD (Romans 9-11)

II. APPLICATION (Romans 12:1-15:13)

A. A CHRISTIAN IS A LIVING SACRIFICE (Romans 12)

B. A CHRISTIAN IS TO SUBMIT TO AUTHORITY (Romans 13)

C. A CHRISTIAN IS TO LOVE THOSE WHO DIFFER (Romans 14)

D. SUMMARY OF KEY APPLICATIONS (Romans 15:1-13)

CONCLUSION (Romans 15:14-16:27)