

Thoughts on the Book of Romans

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Introduction

I have combined twenty of our weekly devotionals into one PDF book form file for easier reading.

I hope you find these comments on the book of Romans to be helpful with your walk with the Lord.

You may not find a lot that you haven't read before, but it is always helpful to be reminded of the great doctrines of the church and how they are applied in our daily walk with the Lord.

It's good to be reminded that God saved us from our sins, because of His great love for us and how He extended His grace to save us, as unworthy as we are.

Your thoughts and comments, pro and con are always welcome. Contact@about-him.com

I'm Not Ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (part 1)

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

We don't know who founded the church at Rome, but it was not the apostle Paul. Perhaps it was Priscilla and Aquila in whose house they met (Ac. 16:3). Perhaps it was some of the Jews and proselytes (Ac. 2:10) who were at Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was first poured out. Being filled with the Spirit, they returned to Rome and established a church there. The church also had gentile members. Perhaps Cornelius the Roman centurion or some of his household, whom God had filled with His Spirit (Ac.10), had returned to Rome and carried the gospel back with them?

It is believed that the Roman church was primarily Jewish with a faction of Gentiles. It is easy to see that there would be conflicts between these two groups of believers. As in any conflict, somebody was right and somebody else was wrong. Or both were partly right and partly wrong. Both sides held their prejudices. The Jews held to their claim as God's chosen people and the Gentiles felt that the Jews were steeped in ritual and tradition. Both had something to learn, as do we (1 Co. 8:2). The important thing is that Paul considered both groups to be believers with equal standing in the sight of God. They had been saved by grace, washed in the blood of Jesus, and filled with the Holy Ghost (Eph. 2:8; 1 Co. 6:11; Tit. 3:5). That has never changed! God doesn't look at the name over our church door, nor does He care about our pedigree. His only demand is that we believe and obey the gospel (Mr. 1:15).

Not ashamed

In this day of political correctness, the world would like Christians to simply keep their mouths shut. Sorry, we can't do that. First of all, Jesus said that if we don't confess Him before men, He won't confess us before His Father and His angels in heaven (Mt. 10:32; Lu. 12:8). Remember when some Pharisees wanted Jesus to silence some children who were getting a bit beside themselves in praising Him? Jesus said that if they were to hold their peace, the stones of the earth would cry out in their place (Lu. 19:40). I don't want any stones crying out in my stead.

Psalms 119:46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Romans 10:11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

2 Timothy 1:8 Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

The gospel of Christ

There are many gospels, but only one gospel of Christ. In the early 20th century some progressive preachers replaced the preaching of the cross with what they labeled as the social gospel. Later in the civil rights movement of the sixties, the cross took a back seat to promoting civil rights. One of the main leaders of the movement is on record as arguing against the resurrection of Jesus. Needless to say, society's ills need to be corrected, but let's not forsake Jesus in the process. Now we have the prosperity gospel that perverts the gospel of Christ and places riches as the proof of discipleship. Once again the blood bought way of salvation takes a back seat to the soothing of our carnal desires. See: [God Wants You Rich](#)

The apostle Paul said that if an angel from heaven were to preach any other gospel than he had preached, let that angel be accursed (Ga. 1:9). Come to think of it, there is a very large cult here in the west that started as a so called restoration movement, at the supposed direction of an angel. They teach that the Father was once a man who ascended to godhood. Another gospel is promoted by those who acknowledge Jesus as a god rather than the one God Almighty described in Deuteronomy 6:4. Any gospel that denies the divinity of Jesus is a gospel that will take us straight to hell.

The gospel of Christ is exclusive. Jesus said that He was the Life, the Truth and the Way and that no man could come to the Father, except by Him (Jn. 14:6). There's only one way to God and that is through Jesus. He is the eternal God who was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory (1Ti 3:16) .

John 8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am [he], ye shall die in your sins.

The power of God

Power is energy, defined as work performed in a measurable unit of time. God demonstrated His power when He spoke the worlds into existence. This was vividly demonstrated when He said, "Let there be light" and instantly there was light (Ge. 1:3). Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of God and enthroned in the heavens far above all the powers of this earth (Ep. 1:19-23).

We likewise have been translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, by God's glorious power (Ga. 1:11-13).

Unto salvation

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

To everyone who believes

Some call it easy believism, but scripture cannot be more clear. When we truly believe on Jesus, life is imparted. When we recognize our own sinfulness and look to the sacrifice of Jesus as atonement for our sins, we become a new creature. John 1:12-13 lets us know that when we believed on and received Jesus, we were born of God.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

When we believe God, we will obey all of His commands and seek for the fulfillment of all of His promises. Jesus is eager to baptize us with His Spirit.

Mark 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

John 6:35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

John 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Believing on Jesus takes away condemnation that results from our past sins. But if we don't believe Him, we are condemned to eternal damnation.

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Eternal life with Jesus is our reward for believing on and obeying Jesus.

John 11:25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:

To the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

The Jews at Rome clung to their designation as God's chosen people and were perhaps slow to recognize the gentiles. Later in Romans, Paul lets them know that they had lost their lofty status, because of disobedience. Likewise the gentiles who once knew God but who refused to honor Him as God had been given over by God to fulfill all of the works of the flesh. Paul let both groups know that all were in need of a Savior.

Romans 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

I'm Not Ashamed of the Gospel (part 2)

Romans 1:1 ¶ Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Paul a servant of Jesus Christ

Paul, a freeborn citizen of Rome, when slavery was very prevalent chose to be called the bondservant of Christ. It has been estimated that up to 90% of the Roman world was made up of slaves. The slave of that time had much more freedom than the slaves of the American south in the 1860s, but the fact remains that they were owned by another. We read in Exodus of the slave who refused freedom and declared that he would stay with his master, because he loved him. When this happened, an aul was pierced through his ear and he was pinned to the door of the masters house.

Paul reminds us in Galatians 6:17 that he bore the mark of Christ in his own body. No doubt he was referring to being stoned and being beaten three times with rods as well as being shipwrecked and stranded at sea (2 Co. 11:25).

1 Corinthians 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians 7:23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

Called to be an apostle

In Galatians 1:15-16 We read of Paul being called by the grace of God at his birth and appointed to preach the gospel to the heathen. This he could not do until God had revealed his Son to Paul. Paul received this revelation when he was struck down on the road to Damascus. Blinded and flat on his back He cried out, "Who are you, Lord?" The answer came back, I am Jesus.... (Ac. 9:5)" In Ac. 13:2 he was separated and sent forth by the Holy Ghost and sent out on the mission field. With a resume like that, who can doubt Paul's credentials? Sometimes we also have to be flat on our backs before we cry out to God for help, eh?

Separated unto the gospel of God

We mentioned earlier that there are a lot of gospels floating around, but only one gospel of God, which gives us hope of eternal salvation. A good definition of the gospel is given by Jesus in Luke 24:46:

Luke 24:46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Romans 1:2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

This gospel was promised by the prophets in the holy scriptures. Remember the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. He was reading Isaiah 53 and asked Phillip, "Is the writer talking of himself or another?" Phillip began at the same scripture and preached Jesus to him (Ac. 8:35). I'm sure he mentioned Isaiah 7:14, of a virgin bearing a Son and calling His name Immanuel, meaning God with us. Or Isaiah 9:6 of a human son being called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. He may have mentioned Isaiah 40. The Lord God would come among them as a Shepherd caring for His tender lambs. When they saw this they are instructed to go to the high mountains and cry out, "Behold your God!"

Phillip must have covered a lot of ground because when they came to a body of water, the eunuch stated, "Here is water what hinders me from being baptized? Phillip said he could on the condition that he believed the word with all of his heart. The eunuch replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Phillip baptized him in water according to the words of Jesus in Mark 16:16 and Matthew 28:19, and the example of Peter in implementing these commands in Acts 2:38. The eunuch came up rejoicing and he and Phillip went their separate ways. The eunuch is said to have carried the gospel to Egypt. The Egyptian Coptic Church claims him as their founder.

*Romans 1:3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*

Jesus is the Son of God. He is the eternal Word which was in the beginning with God and was God. The Word was made flesh and His glory was beheld as the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:1,14). His human genealogies were traced by both Matthew and Luke and showed Him to be a Son of David according to His flesh (Mt. 1:1-16; Lu. 3:23-30). This fulfilled the promise of God in Psalms 132:11 that from the fruit of David's loins He (God) would set on David's throne. He was declared and proven to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead by God's Spirit that resided in Him.

Romans 1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

It was from Jesus that Paul receives authority and anointing to carry the gospel to a large part of the known world to make known the mighty name of Jesus (Php. 2:9-11). We likewise have been commissioned by Jesus to carry the good news of the gospel to every creature in every part of the earth (Mk. 16:15-16; Mt. 28:19-20). Just as Paul relied on the grace and power of God, we rely on the power given to us by the Holy Ghost that enables us to be witnesses of Jesus to Jerusalem, Judea and the uttermost parts of the earth. Most of us won't go to Jerusalem or Judea, but we can be witnesses at home, downtown or wherever there is somebody who needs to hear the good news of Jesus Christ (Ac. 1:8).

Romans 1:6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:

I like this verse. This epistle is not just some abstract thesis written for some ancient people, it includes you and me also. Think about it. We are the called of Jesus Christ. We are allowed to sit in heavenly in Christ Jesus (Ep. 1:3, 2:6). Is there any higher honor on this earth?

In verses 7-13 Paul salutes the Roman church and commends them for their faith which is spoken well of throughout the Christian world. He never fails to make mention of them in his prayers. Although he has been prohibited by the Spirit he continually petitions God to allow him to travel to Rome. He desires to share and expound the gospel to them, that they might have a deeper understanding of their faith in Christ. He desires to impart to them some spiritual gift.

Romans 1:14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.

15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.

The gospel of Christ stood in opposition to the eloquent speeches of the Greeks who prided themselves on being masters of logic. The Roman influence was their great system of law, much of which is the foundation of our modern law systems today. The Jews relied on being God's chosen who preserved His law and followed it to the letter, but knew little of it's Spirit. Some of these people may have been of good moral character. Some probably were evil. All were dwelling in darkness.

2 Corinthians 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

2 Timothy 1:10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

Paul felt obligated to preach to any of them who would receive it. Is this not still our commission? Nothing has changed. We, like these ancient peoples still rely on everything except what we should be relying on.

Proverbs 16:25 ¶ There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof [are] the ways of death.

You may have read in the newspaper that the United States no longer has a Protestant Christian majority. Perhaps this explains why abortion is so unabashedly being championed in our present presidential election as a woman's right to choose. Not to mention opposition to God's ordinance of marriage as between one man and one women. So what is the answer? It is still found in the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Romans 1:16 ¶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Some additional background:

Romans 16 is mostly used for greetings to acquaintances of the Apostle Paul such as Pricilla and Aquila who were now living in Rome. We note there that Paul's epistle to the Romans is delivered by a lady named Phebe who was a deaconess of the church of Chenchrea, which was a suburb of Corinth where Paul was staying on his second missionary journey.

In Romans 16:27 there is a subscript, inserted by the translators of the KJV bible that states that the epistle was ,“Written to the Romans from Corinthus, [and sent] by Phebe servant of the church at Cenchrea.”

In Romans 16:2, Paul asked the Roman saints to assist Phebe in whatever business she had in Rome. This doesn't really fit the picture of first century female saints being oppressed, does it? We can surmise that when Paul heard that Phebe was going to Rome, he figured it was a good time to sit down and write them a letter. When he had finished he had compiled what has come to be known as the Gospel according to Paul. It was stated by a skeptic named Renan that, “When Phebe sailed from Corinth with Paul's epistle she carried with her the whole future of Christian theology.”

Somebody Has Said

An ineffably holy God, who has the utmost abhorrence of sin, was never invented by any of Adam's descendents. A.W. Pink

All Have Sinned

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

In our last 2 devotionals, we mentioned that the gospel story of the sacrifice of Jesus at Calvary and His subsequent resurrection stands in opposition to all of the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of this world. It is the power of God unto salvation. When we believe and act on God's word, we become new creatures in Him (Jn. 5:24; 2 Co. 5:17). We find that we begin to walk in God's righteousness

as He directs our paths (Ga. 2:20).

I find it interesting that the KJV translators marked Romans 1:16-18 as a distinct paragraph, which denotes a group of similar thoughts. Verse 18 is conjoined to verses 16 & 17 by the conjunction *For*, which would mean because of. Thus a contrast is demonstrated between those who obey the gospel and those who know the truth of God's holiness, but choose to continue on in a life of sin.

Paul has a lot to say about sin in the upcoming chapters of Romans. He comments on the sins of the Gentiles. Paraphrasing Romans 1: 18:23: "They once had an inward awareness that God existed. Looking at the wonders of creation, they would have had to conclude that Someone bigger than themselves brought all of this to come about." Oh, that men should be so smart today.

They knew God but would not glorify Him as God. They became vain in their imaginations and as a result their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. (Isn't that the way of the world today)? They changed the glory of an incorruptible God to that of corruptible man and then to birds, to four footed beasts and then to creeping things. Note the progression from birds down to creeping things. They worshipped the creature more than the Creator. That's the way of sin. It always has a downward progression that leads to death and hell.

As a result of the Gentiles' unbelief and willful disobedience, God gave them up and gave them free rein to practice all manner of vile lust and indulge in every sin imaginable. These sins are itemized in Romans 1:25-31.

Paul didn't cut the Jews any slack either. They knew the law of God but didn't obey it. They were guilty of many of the same sins as the Gentiles. They relied on the circumcision of their flesh while ignoring the circumcision of their spirit.

After laying out his orderly thesis, Paul states his conclusion: All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All are in need of the Savior. All are subject to the wrath of God. We don't like to talk about sin, much less the wrath of God. However, the Bible is not silent on these subjects. It has been noted that when Paul itemizes the various sins in his epistles, they seem to fall into two groups that could be called the sins of the flesh and the sins of the spirit. Either group will send us to hell, but the shed blood of Jesus cleanses us from both.

The apostle John said that if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourself and that the truth is not in us (1 Jo. 1:8). I believe John is stating that perhaps we feel that since we made some drastic changes when we came to Christ, we don't have any room for improvement. We have regular church attendance, pay our tithes and are no longer drinking and carousing. A vast improvement over what we once were. We're looking pretty good. Galatians 5:20-21 lists a few sins that perhaps we've overlooked such as: Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance,

emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, and envying.

And then of course there is sowing discord among the brethren.

I believe that the closer we get to God the more we become aware of our own sinfulness. The prophet Isaiah was functioning as a prophet in the king Uzziah's court when he was caught up to heaven (Is. 6:1-8). When he saw the Lord, he became acutely aware of his sin and cried out. His sin was purged by live coals from the heavenly altar. God's fire is still available today (Lu. 3:16).

Awareness of sin brings conviction and we also cry out for cleansing. When God forgives, He also forgets. Satan, the accuser of the brethren (Re. 12:10), likes to keep us in condemnation. The old hymn [*A Crimson Stream*](#) by Bis. G.T. Haywood gives us the answer to this:

When we receive God's forgiveness we can confidently join with the apostle Paul in stating "... I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day (2Ti. 1:12)."

The wrath of God: The believer need not worry about the wrath of God as long as he/she keeps on believing. We are not appointed to wrath but to obtain salvation (1Th 5:9).

Wrath is appointed to those who ignore the gospel and continue in a life of sin. Note the contrast: Tribulation and anguish to the unbeliever and glory, honour, and peace to the believer.

How about joining me with a great big, THANK YOU, JESUS?

Somebody Has Said

"If the Lord's bearing our sin for us is not the gospel, I have no gospel to preach."
(C.H. Spurgeon) Abraham Believed God

Abraham Believed God

God called our father Abraham to leave his father's house and come out of a pagan and idolatrous society. He was to travel to an unknown land, which the Lord would show him as time went by. God promised to bless him and make his name great (Ge. 12:1-2). Abraham believed God and began his journey.

God promised Abraham an heir, even though he was old and past the age of reproducing. God, who calls things which are not as though they are, said that He

had already made Abraham a father of many nations.

Abraham was fully persuaded that God was able to perform that which He had promised. He didn't stagger at the promises of God. He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness (Ro. 4:17-22).

Later, after Isaac was born, God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac on the altar of sacrifice. Once again, Abraham obeyed. When questioned by Isaac as to why they were not carrying a sacrifice, Abraham replied that God would provide Himself a lamb for the sacrifice (Ge. 22:8). Abraham knew who the sacrifice would be. Jesus said that Abraham had seen His day and rejoiced (Jn. 8:56). He saw Calvary and the day of redemption. He believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness.

John Phillips stated in his book *Exploring Romans* that Abraham did the only thing a person can do without doing anything - he believed God. Obviously Abraham was an upstanding individual of good moral character, but this didn't earn him salvation in the sight of God. I'm sure that he had done many good works, but this didn't matter. The thing that did matter was that he believed God.

You and I are in a similar circumstance as Abraham. The gospel called us out of a pagan and sinful society when we were sinners condemned to die. However God in His mercy offered us a chance to live.

God is just, He is Holy, He is sinless, He is perfect and He has given us the privilege of being partakers of His divine nature (2 Pe. 1:4). He took us just as we were when we believed the gospel and called out for forgiveness. He covered our sins and promised to remember them no more. Moreover, He gives us victory over our sin.

The only condition is that we believe on Jesus. We believed when we first heard the gospel, we believed when we repented and obeyed the word in water baptism (Ac. 2:38) and we believed Him as He filled us with His Spirit (Ac. 1:8). We will continue believing until the day that we leave this world, either by death or being caught up to meet Him in the clouds of heaven.

Friend, if you are struggling with sin and wondering if you are good enough to be saved? You're not. We were sinners, doomed for eternal punishment. However, God has made a way of escape. Jesus shed His perfect blood to give us an atonement for sin. That means that we are set AT ONE with God. Jesus stood in our place and paid the one and only requirement for our salvation (propitiation - Ro. 3:25). He gave His perfect blood. If we believe His promises, He will be with us and enable us for the rest of our journey.

It's not about our goodness, or our works. It's all about His grace (Eph. 2:8).

"If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this." - C. S. Lewis

Peace With God Through Our Lord Jesus Christ

At this point in his narrative, Paul has finished laying the groundwork that showed that all men were sinners and condemned before God. Whether Jew or Gentile, all men were guilty and in need of a Savior. Using the example of father Abraham, he showed that we are saved by faith and faith alone, rather than by our good works. Abraham believed God and by acting upon his belief, demonstrated that he had genuine faith (Ja. 2:17). Likewise our faith is demonstrated by believing and obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we believe the gospel, we are declared righteous before God; this is not the end of our journey, but only the beginning and what a marvelous journey it is. Because we have placed our faith in the fact that Jesus took our place on the cross and shed His blood on our behalf, we now have peace with God. Having peace with God, we do not have to fear His wrath, now or in the future (Ro. 5:9-10).

Because of Jesus, our faith in Him gives us 24/7 access to the throne of God. He went beyond the veil that separated us from God and entered into the holy of holies on our behalf. Jesus is our High Priest. He continually lives and makes intercession for us at the throne of God (He. 4:15, 7:24-25, 8:1, 9:11,24).

Jesus our High Priest was pleased to take the nature of man and dwell among us (Php. 2:5-8). He was tempted in all the areas that we are tempted, yet He was without sin. Because of such a High Priest, we can come boldly to the throne of God to find help in the time of need. We don't have to wait until we're on a spiritual high, heaven's door is continually open. Our High Priest will meet us there. Our faith has purchased us access into this grace in which we stand.

We have fellowship with God because we are at peace with Him. We have no condemnation because we are in Christ Jesus, we don't walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Ro. 8:1). Having this intimate relationship with our Creator produces joy. We express our joy in a continual outpouring of praise and adoration to Him.

However: Tribulation is an integral part of our Christian experience. Jesus told us that we would have tribulation in this world but that we can rejoice because He has overcome the world (Jn. 16:33). He said we would be hated of all men, because of Him (Lu. 21:17). We in the western world don't see a lot of this

because our society is based on religious tolerance. It doesn't take a genius to see that this is changing and that opposition to the Christian faith is increasing. We are not ashamed of the testimony of Jesus because He dwells in our hearts by His Spirit and He has promised to go with us every step of the way end (Mt. 28:20; He. 13:5). We also have the tribulations of everyday life. A lot of things can change in a moment such as loss of work, finances and health. We have a loving God who feeds the sparrow and clothes the lily. He knows the number of hairs on our head. He is eager for us to trust Him so that He can demonstrate His care for us (Mt. 6:25-34).

On Another Note

Our hearts go out to the millions of people who are suffering because of hurricane Sandy. It is my prayer all those who are affected will be able to look beyond their circumstances and call upon our Savior. Perhaps you've noticed that people in authority are taking notice of what some call global warming and others dismiss as climate. Given the frequency of these killer storms, many are asking, "Is this the new normal?" and "What can we do about it?". The consensus seems to be that yes, this is the new normal that is only going to get worse. The following scripture has been on my mind since hurricane Sandy began. The phrases, distress of nations, with perplexity; and The sea and the waves roaring keep going over and over in my mind.

Luke 21:25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;

All of these things are to precede the Lord's return. The phrase, "When we see these things begin to come to pass indicates to me that things will progressively get worse (Mt. 24:8). However, we don't despair we are to look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. What do you think?

"Live as if you thought that Christ might come at any time. Do everything, as if you did it for the last time. Say everything, as if you said it for the last time. Read every chapter in the Bible, as if you did not know whether you would be allowed to read it again." - J. C. Ryle

Reconciled by His Death and Saved by His Life

Romans 5:6 ¶ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Our father Adam sinned and caused all of us to be labeled as sinners, estranged from God. Adam was created in the image of God. Before he sinned, he was a perfect man. Had he not sinned, we all would be perfect creatures also. That's not exactly the case, is it? If Adam had not sinned, we all would have been communing with God in the garden of Eden. By sinning, Adam separated the whole human race from fellowship with God. One simple act and we all were condemned to die.

Another Adam, who was the Lord from heaven, saved us by one single act. He gave His life as a ransom for us on the cross of Calvary (1 Co. 15:45-49).

Romans 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Note the comparative phrase, Much more then. God saved us while we were still in the depths of sin. He washed us in the blood of Jesus. He cast our sins into the depths of the sea, which is often referred to as the sea of forgetfulness.

Psalms 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, [so] far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Because our slate has been wiped clean by the blood of Jesus, we don't live in fear of the wrath of God which will be descending upon this evil world. We are not appointed unto wrath, but to obtain salvation (1 Th. 5:9).

Micah 7:18 Who [is] a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth [in] mercy.

19 He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

God looked for a righteous man who could act as our intercessor, but He couldn't find any. I'm sure He looked at Moses, Abraham and David. As good as they were, we know that they didn't measure up as perfect in the sight of God. So God took it upon Himself to purchase our salvation.

Isaiah 59:16 ¶ And he saw that [there was] no man, and wondered that [there was] no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.

1 Timothy 3:16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God

was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

*Romans 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.
11 And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

Saved by the life of Jesus

When we heard the gospel, we were faced with a decision. Either take God at His word or call Him a liar. We became conscious of our sin and realized that we couldn't save ourselves. We may have tried it, but for every step forward, we took two backward. Having received the free gift of salvation (Ro. 5:15-18), We now rejoice that Jesus lives and abides in us by the power of His Spirit. We are new creatures. Old things have passed away and all things have become new (2 Co. 5:17).

We realize that we are not our own, because we were bought with a price that was far greater than all the gold and silver of this world. Because we were bought and redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, we do our best to glorify God in our body and spirit which belong to Him anyway (1 Co. 6:19-20; 1 Pe.1:18-19).

We took Jesus at His word that He was The Life (Jn. 14:6) and that if we believed on Him, we would never die (Jn. 11:25). We asked for His Living Water and it was His good pleasure to fill us with His Spirit (Lu. 11:13).

John 4:10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

John 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Remember this old chorus?

*The river is flowing, it's flowing in me
It's not to the ankle, it's not to the knee
It's waters to swim in and it's setting me free
The river is flowing, it's flowing in me*

John 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

1 John 5:11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

The life that we now live is a lot different than the one we used to live. Why? Because we died to sin by the power of His blood and live our new life in the power of His Spirit. A vast difference!

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Somebody Has Said

"When we preach Christ crucified, we have no reason to stammer, or stutter, or hesitate, or apologize; there is nothing in the gospel of which we have any cause to be ashamed." (C.H. Spurgeon)

Thoughts on Romans 6

Romans 6:1 ¶ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

Up to this point in his letter to the Romans, Paul has firmly established that all men were sinners, separated from God and doomed to die. It's good to have good works, but we can't boast about them. They will earn us no bonus points in the sight of God. We are saved by grace and grace alone. Jesus demonstrated the love and grace of God, by dying in our place on the cross of Calvary, while we were still mired in sin.

I suspect that when Paul came to this point in his epistle, he perhaps thought that since he had talked so much about grace, a future reader might get the idea that he could do anything he wanted and the grace of God would excuse it. Paul's answer was, "God forbid!"

Romans 6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

It's logical to think that a new convert in the roman church might ask such a question and be excused for his ignorance. The problem is that many in the modern church are not only asking the same question, but concluding that they can do anything they want and still be covered by God's grace. God forbid applies just as much to our modern times as it did to the roman church.

Adam Clark states that God forbid would be more accurately translated as, "Let it not be; by no means; far from it; let not such a thing be mentioned." Paul then asks us to consider our water baptism. Did we submit to water baptism in the Lord's name, just because it was the thing to do? Or because we were swayed by

the emotion of the moment? No, I believe it was because we had believed the gospel and desired to be obedient to the Lord's commands of Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:16 which were put into effect by Peter on the day of Pentecost (Ac. 2:38).

The risen Christ had spent forty days giving commandments pertaining to the kingdom of God to His apostles (Ac. 1:3). On the day of Pentecost Peter stood with the other eleven apostles and preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus to a mocking crowd. When they were pricked in their hearts, they asked what it was necessary for them to do for salvation? Peter commanded repentance, water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins with the promise of the infilling of the Holy Ghost to all who had obeyed and even unto us who were afar off. As the infant church grew, they continued in the apostle's doctrine (Ac. 2:42).

Water baptism was administered by Phillip to the Ethiopian eunuch (Ac. 8:38), Peter baptized the household of Cornelius in the name of the Lord (Ac. 10:48) and Paul baptized the twelve Ephesian believers in the name of the Lord Jesus (Ac. 19:5).

Romans 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

We desired to identify with the Lord's death by being buried in the likeness of His death, that we might be raised up from sin by the same glory of the Father that raised Jesus from the grave.

Romans 6:5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

Reading the verse above at face value, I can hardly consider water baptism to be optional.

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

In 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 Paul reminds us that Jesus, the Lord from heaven, was made a quickening, or life giving spirit, by His resurrection from the dead. Just as we have borne the image of the earthly Adam, we will bear the image of the heavenly Adam who is the Lord from heaven. We were changed into His image by our resurrection from the grave of sin and will be totally changed into

incomprehensible glory when He returns for His saints. So why should we ever entertain the thought of sinning against Him?

Paraphrasing Romans 6:9-15: Don't we know that Jesus gained victory over death by His resurrection? Death no longer has dominion over Him, or over us. Jesus died once and now He lives unto God. We should consider that we also are dead to sin, but alive to God. We are instructed to not let sin reign in our mortal bodies, so that we don't obey its sinful lust. James had something to say about this in James 1:15. We can't stop temptation from appearing but we don't have to obey it. Jesus is our example. Because he suffered temptation, He is able to succour us (def. To give assistance, especially in time of difficulty), when we are tempted (He. 2:18). He was tempted in all the same points as we are, yet He was without sin (He. 4:15).

Romans 6:15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

In Romans 6:15 Paul repeats his question from verse 1. "Are we going to sin because we are under grace rather than the law? Once again the answer is a resounding , "God forbid!"

Romans 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

We may not like it but we only have two choices. We can yield to sin which brings death or we can obey which leads to righteousness. There are two spiritual rulers, either God or the devil. We can't stay neutral, we have to obey one or the other. Likewise there are only two places to spend eternity.

Romans 6:17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.

Paul commended the Romans for obeying a certain form of doctrine. Evidently doctrine is important. What form of doctrine had the Romans obeyed? It was the same apostle's doctrine which they learned at the feet of Jesus.

Paraphrasing Romans 6:17-21: When we were freed from sin we became servants of righteousness, simply doing the right things that God requires. Because of the frailty of our flesh, we need to remember how easily we yielded ourselves to do abominable things when we were under the bondage of sin. Those things only yielded the fruit of death. Now that we have a new Master, we need to follow His example and yield ourselves to the rule of holiness.

*Romans 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.
23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

O Wretched Man That I Am, or Was

Last week in Romans 6, we spoke of our identify being established with Christ in the waters of baptism. We were buried with Him in the likeness of His death and raised to walk in the likeness of His resurrection. It is believed that Paul was directing this chapter to the gentile members of the Roman church. They had come from a pagan society. They were just becoming acquainted with the eternal God of the bible. The Jewish members of the Roman church were in a different situation. They had been schooled in the law of the Old Testament. After accepting Jesus as their Messiah, it was difficult for them to realize that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Old Testament law. Where the law proscribed death for sin, Jesus died on our behalf. The law could convict us of sin, but it could never give us salvation.

Paul addresses these Jewish members in Romans 7. Paul who described himself as being a Pharisee the son of a Pharisees (Ac. 23:6), had been an astute keeper of the law. His desire was to do good, but sometimes he did just the opposite. He said that when he would do good, evil was always present to hinder him. He concluded that the law could only condemn him, it had no power to change the inherent sin that dwelled in his being. His heart's cry was, O wretched man that I am, who can deliver me? He tells us very plainly in chapter 8. Jesus is our deliverer!

Romans 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Romans 7:24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

It's easy to cherry pick scriptures such as this to excuse our laziness and lack of spirituality. We need to remember that Paul in Romans 7 is simply stating the condition he was in before he had an encounter with the living Christ. We were all in the same condition, but something happened. We're changed! We are not the person we used to be! Why? Because Jesus lives inside! We are new creatures in Him. Old things have passed away, and all things have become new (2 Co. 5:17). The life that we now live, we live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us.

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are

sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Now we come to Romans chapter 8. We note that the first phrase of text contains the words, There is therefore. We've said many times that when we come to the word therefore, we need to backup and see what therefore is therefore. Paul is reflecting back to chapter 7 and continuing his discussion in chapter 8.

Paul's letter to the Romans was not written in chapters. Chapters 7 and 8 are a continuous discussion. It is unfortunate that the bible translators made a chapter break between them. Chapters 7 and 8 should not be read separately. To get the total context, they should be read together.

Paul gives the answers that we all need in chapter 8. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:1 ¶ There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

So just what does it mean to be walking in the Spirit?

"It is only in proportion as the Christian manifests the fruit of a genuine conversion that he is entitled to regard himself and be regarded by others as one of the called and elect of God. It is just in proportion as we add to our faith the other Christian graces that we have solid ground on which to rest in the assurance we belong to the family of Christ. It is not those who are governed by self-will, but "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14)" - A.W. Pink.

Walking in the Spirit

Last week we sent a rather short devotional. We'll try to make up for that this week. Our basic thought was that Romans 6 and 7 should always be read as one continuous writing. It's easy to read "O wretched man that I am" and say, "Yep that's me, I'm no different than the apostle Paul." We must remember that Paul is describing "The law of sin and death in chapter 7" and "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus in chapter 8."

Romans 8:1 ¶ There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Last week we asked, "So just what does it mean to be walking in the Spirit?" Some would have us believe it's when we're sky high after a Sunday evening shout. Those are nice, but it's how we walk in our Wednesday morning lows that really count.

Upon conversation, we must recognize that we are new creatures in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Recognizing this, we are easily led by the Spirit of God.

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

There is a law of the Spirit which is opposite the law of sin.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

At Calvary, Jesus removed the barrier between us and God. We can now fulfill His righteousness.

Romans 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

We must walk in the Spirit to maintain life in Christ.

Romans 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Our carnal nature is opposed to God.

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

We must walk in the Spirit to please God.

Romans 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

The spiritual person does not walk after the flesh.

Romans 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

10 ¶ And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Our spiritual life or death depends on walking in the Spirit

Romans 8:13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

The evil person loves darkness, the spiritual person loves light.

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

The spiritual person walks by faith in the righteousness of Christ.

Philippians 3:9 ¶ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

We are new creatures in Christ (2 Co. 5:17) and we must abide in Christ (in the Spirit) to maintain that relationship.

John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

The spiritual person is patterned after Christ the Creator.

Colossians 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

And he/she shares His attributes.

1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: The spiritual person makes a conscious effort to put off the old man and the works of the flesh.

*Colossians 3:8 ¶ But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.
9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;*

Ephesians 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

The spiritual person "puts on" the new man.

Ephesians 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

The spiritual person lives a sober lifestyle.

*Titus 2:11 ¶ For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,
12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;*

The spiritual person "puts on" the attributes of God.

*Colossians 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;
14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

The spiritual person is looking for the Lord's return.

Titus 2:13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

The spiritual person is a praising person.

*Ephesians 5:18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;
19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*

And also a thankful person.

Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

The spiritual person is a mature person.

1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

We grow in spiritual maturity in relation to our knowledge of Christ.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

The spiritual person prays instead of worrying.

*Philippians 4 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.
7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

The spiritual person thinks positively.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

More Than Conquerors

Romans 8:1 ¶ There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

What a privilege we have to walk and talk in constant communion with the living God. The Old Testament law showed us our sin and our need for a Savior, but it couldn't save us. We still have law, but it is not the dead letter of rules, rituals and regulations. We now follow the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The Old Testament law could only condemn. The law of the Spirit enables us to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Romans 8:10 ¶ And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Our best efforts at self reformation are of no avail. It is only the indwelling Spirit of God that will make our earthly mortal bodies alive and able to conform to the righteousness of God. We don't owe our flesh anything. If we live after the flesh, we will die. If we kill the deeds of our body we will live. It's as simple as that. Our proof of sonship is demonstrated in how we live.

John 14:15 ¶ If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

If we are led by the Spirit of God, we are the sons of God. For example: The Spirit

puts a check on our tongue before we can utter hurtful words. If we don't heed the warning, the Spirit lets us know, right? It is the Spirit that brings every thought into the obedience of Christ (2 Co. 10:5).

Romans 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Roman 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

17 ¶ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

The Spirit lets us know that we are children of God. However, and it's a big however, there may be some suffering involved. Paul refers to the suffering of this "present time." It appears that the book of Romans was written around A.D. 56-58 and persecution of the church was underway. At first the Roman government only took action upon the complaints of the general populace. Often the complaints were by non-Christian Jews. It became fashionable to blame the Christians for anything that went wrong. In A.D. 64 persecution of Christians became government policy, when the emperor Nero blamed the Christians for the burning of Rome. Persecution continued off and on under various emperors until Constantine made Christianity the state religion. Persecution ceased, but so did total adherence to the apostle's doctrine (Ac. 2:42).

Here's a good web page that details it all. [Religious Facts](#)

Romans 8:26 ¶ Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Romans 8:34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

The workings of the manifestations of God within the godhead are to say the least, sometimes a bit confusing. Here's how I see it: As the old Christmas carol O Come All Ye Faithful so accurately states, Jesus was "the Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing. (Jn.1:1,14)." Upon His resurrection, Jesus was made a quickening or live giving Spirit (1 Co. 15:45). He, in His glorified body, is seated at the right hand of God (1 Peter 3:22), which is a euphuism for the place of power and authority. There He ever lives and makes intercession for us.

Romans 8:26 tells us that the Spirit helps our infirmities and makes intercession for us. Romans 8:34 states that it is Christ who is seated at the right hand of God who makes intercession for us. Some conclude that we have two intercessors, but

Ephesians 4:4 tells us that there is one Spirit and 2 Corinthians 3:17 tells us that the Lord is that Spirit, the same Spirit by which we are all baptized into the body of Christ (1 Co. 12:13). Upon His Ascension, Jesus claimed all power in heaven and in earth (Mt. 28:18) and Colossians 1:19 and 2:9 reminds us that all the fullness of the Deity dwells in Him bodily.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Whether feast or famine, sickness or health, scarcity or abundance, all things work together for good. It is God who works in us to will and to do His good pleasure (Php. 2:13).

Romans 8:29 ¶ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

We were predestined before creation to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. At that time our salvation as well as Bethlehem and Calvary were accomplished facts in the mind of God who calls things as if they are when as yet they are not (Ro. 4:17).

Romans 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Because God chose us, He justified us by the blood of Jesus, and glorified us by His Spirit.

Romans 8:31 ¶ What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

I believe that Paul is warning the Roman church of suffering to come. Let the world say what they will, but we have the assurance that we have been declared righteous by God. If God be for us, who can be against us? In all of our difficulties we are made conquerors by and through Him who loved us. Think about it! If God freely gave His son that we might live, how can we not die for Him, if need be?

Paul sums it all up in words that eloquently speak for themselves. These words apply to us just as much today as they did to the Roman church. They were being warned of persecution to come. We don't hear a lot about it but, large segments of the church today are suffering persecution.

A website worth checking out. [The Persecuted Church](#)

I'm sure that you've noticed that the culture in this post-modern is quickly changing. This was demonstrated by the recent U.S. election where homosexuality, same sex marriage and abortion was openly promoted and defended. God and His absolute Word has been removed from our laws, our courts and our schools. Everything is relative now and there is no absolute truth. *Jesus said otherwise:*

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

It seems that everyday, that supposed violations of church and state are challenged. Any mention of God and especially the name of Jesus will not be tolerated. His name was a stumbling block in the early church age and is still a stumbling block today (Is. 8:14; 1 Pe. 2:8). The preaching of the cross was considered foolishness then and it still is today.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

So, if we are called upon to face tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword, will any of these separate us from the love of Christ? *Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*

No, a thousand times no! In all of these things we are more than conquerors, not by ourselves, but through Him who loved us.

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

"Infinite, and yet an infant. Eternal, and yet born of a woman. Almighty, and yet hanging on a woman's breast. Supporting a universe, and yet needing to be carried in a mother's arms. King of angels, and yet the reputed son of Joseph. Heir of all things, and yet the carpenter's despised son." (Spurgeon)

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ

In Romans 10:1-4, Paul expresses his regrets that his fellow countrymen have rejected the gospel of Christ. They were still zealously practicing the rules and rituals of the law, while refusing to recognize that all of the law pointed to Christ Jesus. When He paid the debt for our sins on the cross of Calvary, the law ended and grace began.

Paul said that they being ignorant of God's righteousness, had not submitted to His righteousness, but had instead gone about to establish their own righteousness. People still do that today, eh? The prophet Isaiah described our own self righteousness as being nothing more than filthy rags (Is. 64:6).

After Israel's rejection of Jesus, God opened the door for the gentiles to be saved. They, by believing and accepting the gospel message of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ were endowed with the righteousness of God which is by faith of Christ Jesus (Ro. 3:22).

Romans 10:5-7 has wording that is somewhat unclear. It warns against looking for another Savior. We can't bring a new Messiah down from heaven, or resurrect a different Christ from the dead. Jesus has already been here and accomplished all that is necessary for our salvation.

Romans 10:8 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

All we can do is to listen to the word of faith that is in our hearts and mouths, and obey it.

Romans 10:9a. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,...

This sounds like what some would call easy believism. Far from it! Our confession of the Lord Jesus stems from the word of faith that God implanted in our hearts when we first heard the gospel. It was all of God's doing, not ours. He favored us to hear the good news that Jesus died for unworthy sinners and He granted us grace to be able to receive it. He chose us first and all we can do is either accept Him or reject Him.

John 1:10-12 tells us the same thing: Jesus the Creator came into the world and the world didn't recognize Him. But those who received Him and believed on His name received the power to become the sons of God. When they received Him, they were born of God. They weren't born by the will of man, but by the will of God.

Romans 10:9b.and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Believing from the heart is a lot different than mere mental assent. Believing that Jesus died for our sins causes repentance which brings forth reformation. The crowd at Pentecost believed the words of Peter and were pricked in their hearts when they realized that they had crucified the Lord of glory. Their believing caused them to cry out, "What must we do?"

Believing from the heart produces discipleship. Jesus laid down some stern guide lines for disciples, such as taking up our cross, forsaking family and possessions and following Him (Lu. 14:26,33).

Believing from the heart causes us to meet the Lord in the waters of baptism. Jesus made it a condition of salvation (Mk. 16:16).

Believing from the heart makes us eager to have the living water of God's Spirit springing up within us unto everlasting life (Jn. 4:14).

Romans 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

It can't be stated much simpler than this.

Romans 10:11 For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

When this was written, people thought twice before they spoke of a new religion. Believers paid a price for giving allegiance to Jesus, rather than Caesar. They lost their homes and professions and were often put to death. So we can be sure that whatever confession proceeded from their mouths originated in their hearts.

Jesus said that if we confess Him before men, He would confess us before His Father in heaven. The first disciples were definitely not ashamed. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of the Lord (Ac. 5:41).

Somebody Has Said

"If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself." - Augustine

Behold the Goodness and Severity of God

Romans 12:1 ¶ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye

present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

In the book of Romans, Paul uses the word therefore 27 times as he builds an orderly thesis to the church at Rome, outlining all the doctrines of the church. Each subject and thought that he presents being an expansion of that which preceded it. As it has often been said, "When we come to the word therefore we must back up and see what therefore is therefore.

In this case Paul is referring backward to his discourse in chapters 9-11 concerning the present blindness of Israel caused by their unbelief and the promise of God for their ultimate restoration.

Romans 11:22 Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in [his] goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.

The gentile nations had once known God, but refused to retain Him in their knowledge. As a result God gave them up to work all manner of evil among themselves (Ro. 1-21-32). Just as God rejected the ancient gentile nations who did want to retain Him in their knowledge, I believe that the so-called Christian nations of the world stand in jeopardy of the same judgment. The United States of America has copied the ways of the ancient gentile nations in trying to not retain the knowledge of God. His name and His word no longer have any place in our government. We have magnified the works of darkness and cannot comprehend that it is the Prince of Darkness himself who is besieging us with an evil epidemic of murder to the point that our children are being gunned down in their schoolrooms.

The Jewish nation was called of God and designated as His chosen people. They were to be the ones who would bring the message of the kingdom of God to a sinful world. However, they failed miserably. They rejected God's righteousness and went about establishing a righteousness of their own. Ultimately they rejected God Himself when He appeared among them as a servant rather than a conquering king (Jn. 1:10).

God then turned to the gentiles and made them the bearers of the gospel message to the whole world. Here Paul is warning the gentile believers against spiritual pride. God is good but He is also severe. Just as He had cut off the Jewish nation, He could cut off the gentiles also. The condition is set forth that we must continue in the goodness of the Lord or we will be cut off also. While this warning is given to the gentile church as a whole, I believe it applies to individuals (Mt. 8:28, Re 3:5) to countries (Ps. 33:12) and even church denominations (Re. 2:5).

Paul is warning the gentile believers against spiritual pride and any feelings of

superiority against the fallen Jewish nation. I believe this applies to our Christian denominations today. In the early 1900s many groups were seeking an outpouring of God's Spirit. When it came, the mainline churches rejected it because it came with tongues and other manifestations of the Spirit that they did not understand. Generally, it was the poor uneducated masses who received it. The Pentecostal message was unwelcome in the mainline churches so these believers met in storefronts and brush arbors. In the 1960s the charismatic revival turned things around a great bit.

Factions of most mainline denominations began to receive the baptism of the Spirit. By this time the early Pentecostal groups now had nice churches and colleges. By and large they sat on their hands and in effect said, "If it isn't raining here, it's not raining!"

Many denominations who once were on fire with the word of God have now lost all semblance to the church that Jesus founded (Mt. 16:18). As an example, you may have read that the Nation Cathedral of Washington D.C. is now performing marriages between members of the same sex?

*Romans 11:33 ¶ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!
34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?
35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?
36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

Romans 12:1 ¶ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Realizing both the goodness and severity of God, we know that He is not a God to be trifled with. We come to Him believing that He is and always has been (Is. 40:28) and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him (He 11:6).

Proverbs 11:18 ¶ The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness [shall be] a sure reward.

Luke 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and [to] the evil.

2 Peter 3:14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

We also know that He takes no pleasure in those who draw back from serving Him (Heb. 10:38). The apostle Peter paints a sad picture of those who have once tasted the goodness of the Lord and then turned back to the bondage of sin. We would do well to take it to heart.

2 Peter 2:20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Having been called out of the darkness of sin by the mercies of God, it is our reasonable service to present our total selves to our Master and to seek His approval for our every word and deed (Co. 3:17). We must live for Him, who died for us.

Ephesian 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

The word *conformed* simply means to take the shape of something, just like water being poured into a bottle. Our minds are constantly being bombarded with things of this world that are contrary to God's word. 1 John 2:16 gives us a good definition of the world as being:

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life which are not of God, but rather of the world. If we are not diligent, we will find ourselves gradually conforming to these things we once rejected. I doubt that I'm alone but I find that my mind needs a constant renewal.

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good

works.

Somebody Has Said

By reading the scriptures I am so renewed that all nature seems renewed around me and with me. The sky seems to be a pure, a cooler blue, the trees a deeper green. The whole world is charged with the glory of God and I feel fire and music under my feet. - Thomas Merton

Think Soberly and Act Accordingly

Romans 12:1 ¶ I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Last week we mentioned that God is a God of goodness, but also a God of severity. The gentile nations had once known God, but refused to retain Him in their knowledge, were given up by God to work all manner of evil among themselves (Ro. 1-21-32). Just as God rejected these ancient gentile nations, we'll face a similar judgment, if we do not continue in the goodness of the Lord.

As God grants us mercy and extends His grace to us, we reject the things of the world and give our whole body soul and spirit to Him as a holy living sacrifice. The word holy in this instance refers to our living sacrifice being sanctified or set aside for the Master's exclusive service.

We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Being transformed denotes a radical change has taken place in our lives. This happened at our new birth (2 Co. 5:17; Ga. 6:15) and we seek to maintain our new mental state by following the admonition of the Apostle Paul that we seek to have the mind of Christ.

*Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is

among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Paul exhorts us to not think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. It is a human tendency to minimize our shortcomings and exaggerate our abilities. The history of the church has shown that great things have been accomplished by men and women who were of a humble spirit. Likewise, much damage has been done when self centered Christians have been consumed with self-importance and self glorification. If we think soberly, we can do an honest self evaluation and assess what our God given gifts and abilities are, and what they are not.

Ephesians 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

No Christian can claim that they have nothing to offer to advance the cause of Christ. Note that Paul said that every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. In Romans 12:6 He states that our gifts differ according to the grace or enabling power that has been given to us.

We remember the Parable of the Pounds (Lu. 19:11-27) and the Parable of the Talents (Mt. 25:14-30). Some servants were given more because of their ability and some were given less; but all were held accountable for that which they had been given. So shall it be with us at the judgment seat of Christ (Ro. 14:10, 2 Co. 5:10). We'll all be asked to give account of how we used the talents that were entrusted to us. Hopefully, none of us will reply like the one man in the parable who had only received one talent, that he buried it in the ground for safe keeping because he was afraid.

We all have been given something to do for the kingdom, but we all can't be top dog, so to speak. Some are called to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor or teachers for the perfecting of the saints (Ep. 4:11-12) but we all are called for ministry to a lost and dying world. Our pastors and bishops will never have any contact with the unsaved people that we see every day. So who is going to give them the good news of the gospel?

Matthew 18:4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Romans 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

“The Christian life is a life that consists of following Jesus.”- A. W. Pink

Many Members in One Body

Last week we covered that we are not to be conformed to the sinful world around us. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Our earnest desire should be that we exhibit the mind of Christ in our every word and deed (Php. 2:5, Co 3:17). We are to walk in humility and to not think too highly of ourselves as we exercise the gifts of God that we have been entrusted with.

We recognize that any achievements and accomplishments that we have obtained in service to the kingdom of God are not of ourselves; they come because of the enabling grace of the Lord.

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of [his] good pleasure.

We strive to be free from feelings of self-elevation, but an area that might trip us up is in judging others. For those of us raised under strict standards, it is hard to adjust to a lot of what we see in churches today. However, while we are judging others for what we consider to be extreme, somebody else will be judging us for not meeting their standards. All of which causes division in the body of Christ. Paul has a lot to say about this in Romans 14). Aren't you thankful that God judges us by the contents of our heart, rather than our outward appearance?

2 Corinthians 10:7 ¶ Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he [is] Christ's, even so [are] we Christ's.

Romans 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

The apostle compares the workings of our physical bodies to the body of Christ of which we all are members and we all have distinct and necessary functions. Just as we vary in our physical bodies, we also have different God given gifts and abilities that make the body of Christ function properly (Ja. 1:17).

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul gives a more detailed comparison of the working of our physical bodies and the spiritual body of Christ.

To paraphrase: We're all different, but we've all been baptized by the one Spirit of God into the one body of Christ (1 Co. 12:13; Ep. 4:4). Each of our physical body

parts have a specific task that was assigned by our Creator. We can't all be an eye, else we wouldn't have any hearing. It's the same in the body of Christ. We are what we are, because God assigned our place in the body. Our spiritual tasks vary, but we are all indispensable to each other. When one member suffers, we all suffer. When one is rejoicing, we all rejoice. When we all function together, the kingdom of God is advanced. When we bite and devour each other, we are consumed of each other (Ga. 5:15) and the kingdom of God suffers.

*Romans 12:6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;
Romans 12:7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;
8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Our gifts vary as God has determined. God has placed prophecy in the body, both foretelling and forth-telling. When we preach the gospel, we are forth telling, if we are speaking with the unction of the Spirit of God. We are told to wait on our ministry and teaching and exhortation. I'm told that the original meaning of the word wait is to serve. In other words, use the gifts that God has entrusted to us.

1 Peter 4:11 If any man speak, [let him speak] as the oracles of God; if any man minister, [let him do it] as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

We have a grave responsibility when we preach, prophecy and exhort. We must preach the word and nothing but the word.

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
My father instructed the young ministers under him to always be prepared.

However, I might have a 30 minute sermon prepared, but if the anointing wasn't flowing, to quit and sit down. The Spirit might desire to minister otherwise than through my well crafted sermon.

Proverbs 25:11 ¶ A word fitly spoken [is like] apples of gold in pictures of silver.

Isaiah 50:4 ¶ The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to [him that is] weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.

2 Peter 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost.

In the rest of this chapter, Paul deals with our responsibilities to God and to each other as fellow members in the body of Christ. There are many parallels to the Sermon on the Mount and other scriptures.

Romans 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Some people are harder to love than others but: We can't pick and choose whom to love and whom to ignore. Cliques in the church are not of God. They are evil and we must abhor that which is evil. Remember that James spoke harshly to those who seated a rich man in an honored place while making a poor man sit on the floor (Ja. 2:1-7)?

Romans 12:11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

Christians who do not handle their finances responsibly and churches that are not open and accountable in their financial dealings, present a bad testimony to the world and are a hindrance to the kingdom of God.

Romans 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

Jesus said that we would have tribulations in the world, but that He had overcome the world (Jn. 16:33).

Romans 12:13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

James told us that it was no profit to us to just say nice platitudes to a brother in need, if we don't help supply his need. (Ja 2:16). John gets a bit harsher and questions if the love of God even dwells in us, if we don't help a brother in need (1 Jo. 3:17).

Romans 12:14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

Jesus told us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us and to pray for those who misuse us. Rather than strike back we are to turn the other cheek (Mt.

5:39,44). Which I might add, you can't do without the enabling grace of God

1 Corinthians 6:7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather [suffer yourselves to] be defrauded?

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

1 Peter 5:5 ¶ Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all [of you] be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Romans 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Live at peace with all men. Leave the paybacks to the Lord. We can overcome evil with good by being kind to our enemies.

Overcome evil with good? Isn't that what it's all about?

Somebody Has Said

The trouble with talking too fast is you may say something you haven't thought of yet. --Ann Landers

The Powers That Be Are Ordained of God

Romans 13:1 ¶ Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Living in the western world, where civil rights are taken for granted, it is difficult to understand this passage. Obviously, the apostle is calling for all Christians to be model citizens. That's not as difficult today, as it was at the time of Paul's

writing. Rome controlled the known world and diligently enforced the Paz Romana, the peace of Rome, which lasted from 27 BC to 180A.D.

The Christians of Rome, were composed of both Jews and Gentiles. The Jews hated the fact that gentiles ruled over them. The Old Testament forbade them from installing a ruler who was not one of their brethren (De. 17:15). They probably remembered Isaiah's prophesy that The Servant of the Lord, the Messiah, would show judgment to the gentiles (Is. 42:1). Rome also had a large number of slaves, many of whom were gentiles and some no doubt Christians.

The powers that be are ordained of God: It's hard to understand how evil rulers, such as Hitler, are appointed by God, but Daniel 2:20 gives us the answer. God is supreme, He allows leaders to be instated and He also removes them. The governments of this earth were intended to follow His principals. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those that understand.

We may not understand God's workings, but His thoughts are not our thoughts nor His ways our ways. The difference between His ways and thoughts compared to ours is as great as the distance between heaven and earth (Is. 55:8-9). His ultimate goal is to see as many souls as possible to escape damnation and receive eternal life in the kingdom of Christ. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should repent (2 Pe. 3:9).

Romans 13:2 Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

We may not like the law of the land, but we are compelled by scripture to obey it. It is the ordinance of God. We disagree with our president and congress concerning abortion and gay rights, but we are obligated to pray, "for kings, and for everyone who has authority, so that we might lead a quiet and peaceful life with all godliness and dignity (1 Ti. 2:2)."

On the other hand, we are not required to obey anything that is contrary to God's word. When the apostles were forbidden to preach in the name of Jesus, Peter's answer was that they should obey God rather than man (Ac. 5;29).

Romans 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

We don't have to fear if we obey the law. If we're not speeding, we don't fear

when a policeman passes us. If we do break the law, we'll have to pay the penalty. Jesus said it would be, "the uttermost farthing (Mt. 5:26)."

Romans 13:5 Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.

6 For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.

While we should be fearful of the wrath of man if we disobey the law, it is better to realize that by obeying the law, we have a clear conscience before God. For this cause we submit to paying our taxes. Nobody likes to pay taxes, but Jesus told us to give Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to give God the things that belong to Him (Mt. 12:17). The sinner is quick to note when a Christian brags about cheating on his taxes. Perhaps if we concentrated more giving God the thing that are His, we wouldn't worry so much about Caesar?

Romans 13:7 ¶ Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

We live in a society today that will sue at the drop of a hat. Lawyers advertise continually seeking to help us receive compensation for even the slightest injury or violation of our rights. This is contrary to the Sermon on the Mount where we're instructed to turn the other cheek and go the second mile. If someone sues for our coat, we're to give them our cloak also. All the while we are to pray for those who spitefully use us.

God is more concerned about our responsibilities to His kingdom than for our personal rights.

Romans 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

"Whatever makes men good Christians, makes them good citizens." - Daniel Webster

Loving God and Our Neighbors as Ourselves

Romans 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

Last week's devotional covered the preceding verses of Romans 13, where Paul stressed that we owe allegiance to our various levels of civil government. Now he stresses our responsibilities to each other. Our sole requirement is to love one another as Christ loved us. I haven't arrived yet in that regard. Have you?

Romans 13:9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law
Adam Clarke states that if we love our neighbor as ourselves, we will not deprive him of his wife, his property or his good name. If we love him as we love ourselves, we will have fulfilled the law. Jesus stated the same in the golden rule.

Matthew 7:12 ¶ Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

A lawyer questioned Jesus as to which commandment was the greatest of all. Jesus replied that we are to love God with all of our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (De. 6:4-5). All of the law and the prophets are based on these commandments (Mt. 22:36-40).

James called it the royal law.

James 2:8 ¶ If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

Paul reaffirmed it throughout his epistles.

1 Timothy 1:5 ¶ Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and [of] a good conscience, and [of] faith unfeigned:

Galatians 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, [even] in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Jonathan Edwards referred to 1 John 4:8 with this quote:

1 John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

The apostle tells us that "God is love": and therefore seeing He is an infinite being, it follows that He is an infinite fountain of love. Seeing he is an all sufficient being, it follows that he is a full and overflowing and fountain of love. And in that He is an unchangeable and eternal being, He is an unchangeable fountain of love.

We cannot love as the scripture requires unless we have first been born of the Spirit of God, because His love, his infinite character is infused into our spiritual DNA by the Holy Ghost that is given to us.

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Peter said that we have been made partakers of His divine nature.

2 Peter 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

John told us to consider the manner of love that God has bestowed upon us, even to the extent that He has allowed us to be his sons (and daughters).

1 John 3:1 ¶ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Being a son of my natural father, I'm told that I walk, talk and even preach like him. Well, being a son of my heavenly Father means that the infinite fountain of love that constitutes His being resides in me also. The world didn't recognize Him when He walked in this world, and it won't recognize us either.

In 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, Paul makes a distinction between an outward show of love and that which is motivated by the indwelling Spirit of God. I might speak with the tongues of men and angels, give all that I have to the poor and even give my body as a martyr and find that it profits me nothing. If the motives aren't right, it's not the love of God.

1 Corinthians 13:1 ¶ Though I have all of the spiritual gifts and speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Then Paul describes what the love of God is:

1 Corinthians 13:4 ¶ Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not;

*charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,
5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked,
thinketh no evil;
6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.*

The resurrected Jesus spoke to the Ephesian church from heaven and condemned them because they had left their first love. They were going through the motions but they had lost the fire in the belly that they had when they first encountered Christ.

Revelation 2:4 Nevertheless I have [somewhat] against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Jesus also spoke to the church of the Laodiceans. Obviously they had left their first love also. They were lukewarm, neither cold nor hot. They had a lot of earthly stuff and considered that they had need of nothing. They were self-centered, self-absorbed and self-sufficient. All of which leads to separation from God.

Revelation 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Do we see any similarities of the church today? More to the point, can I find any of these traits within myself? If I do, the infinite, full and overflowing fountain of love that constitutes God's being cannot be manifested in my mortal life.

I remember an old chorus sung by *The Nancy Harmon Singers*, that is my prayer and I'm sure it is your's also.

*Let Your love flow through me, Let Your love flow through me,
Make me a blessing wherever I may go
Make me pure, make me clean
So that You may be seen
Let your love, let your love, flow through me.*

Deuteronomy 10:12 ¶ And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

"Genuine love is so contrary to human nature that its presence bears witness to an extraordinary power." - John Piper

It's Time to wake Up!

[Last week's devotiona](#) dealt with loving God and our neighbor as our selves. In so doing, we will fulfill all that the Old Testament Mosaic law and the prophets demand.

Romans 13:11 ¶ And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.

Romans 13:11 begins a new paragraph. I believe that the *Weymouth New Testament* translation of verse 11 gives a better sense of tying the present text together with the previous paragraph, than the KJV that I normally use.

"Carry out these injunctions because you know the critical period at which we are living, and that it is now high time, to rouse yourselves from sleep; for salvation is now nearer to us than when we first became believers."

Now is not the time to be self-centered and self-indulgent. It is not the time to ignore our struggling brothers and sisters. We must always treat others as we desire to be treated, even when it hurts (Ps. 15:4). Nor should we be lulled to sleep and be like the Laodicean church who felt that because they had all the creature comforts that one could desire, they had need of nothing else. Jesus thought otherwise: He said that they were, "wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked." Because they were lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, He would spew them out of His mouth (Re. 3:14-22). Certainly that is a warning that we ignore at our own peril.

In Matthew 24, Jesus gives us insights to conditions that would be prevalent, prior to His second coming: False prophets would arise and deceive many. Because iniquity would abound, the love of many would grow cold. However, the person who endured through all of this would be saved. Obviously, we are in a pressing time. We see sin and iniquity on every hand. It's easy to become accustomed to the dark. We yawn at the things that used to give rise to our righteous indignation. For example when Clark Gable uttered a mild profanity at the ending of the movie *Gone With the Wind*, it caused a national uproar. We don't hear too many uproars today over the language in movies and TV, do we?

Matthew 24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Jesus told us that there would be some who figured that the Lord had delayed his coming and would use that as an excuse to abuse their fellow servants. Those who fall into this trap, will find their portion with the unbelievers. (Lu. 12:45). eter tells us that there will be those who question the promise of the Lord's

return. They reason that because its been 2000 years since the promise, it evidently isn't going to happen, so we might as well eat, drink and be merry, for we'll all soon be in the grave. Peter reminds us that God doesn't keep time like we do. With Him, a day is as a thousand years and a year is as a day. He is not anxious to damn us, He is patiently waiting for us to repent (2 Pe. 3:4-10)!

We need to remember that we all are just one heartbeat away from eternity. If we pass on today, we'll meet the Lord in judgment, either for good or bad. For us then , the timing of His return will be a moot point.

Romans 13:12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Paul urges his readers to cast off the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light. This stands in marked contrast to the works of darkness. The works of darkness proceed from Satan and the armor of light proceed from our God whose very being in Light. There is no darkness in Him (1 Jn. 1:5). We have no choice, we have to serve one or the other (Mt. 6:24).

Drowsy Christians are not unique to our times. Paul also warned the Colossians and the Thessalonians against the perils of spiritual slumber.

Ephesians 5:14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

1 Thessalonians 5:6 ¶ Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

We might be spiritual giants, but we are not immune from our lazy and sinful flesh wanting to do it's own thing.

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Some use the preceding verse as an excuse for not coming up to the mark, but that was not Paul's intention. He is warning us that we will fight a battle with our flesh until the day we die. But he also gives us the answer for victorious living, which is walking in the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 [This] I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust

of the flesh.

Roman 8:1 ¶ [There is] therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

In Matthew 25, Jesus gives us the [*Parable of the Ten Virgins*](#) which certainly applies to the end time church. While the virgins were waiting for the Bridegroom to return, they all nodded off to sleep. They were all pure and all had oil in their lamps, which is a type of the Holy Spirit.

When the cry went out that the Bridegroom was returning, they all woke up and began to trim their lamps. Unfortunately five of them missed the coming of the Bridegroom, because they ran out of oil.

The call is going out more urgently than ever that Jesus is on the verge of returning for His saints and to execute judgment on an unbelieving world (Jude 1:14-15). Have we checked our spiritual lamps lately? How's our oil supply?

"I believe the promises of God enough to venture an eternity on them." - Isaac Watts

Why Do I Set My Brother at Naught?

In the 14th chapter of Romans, The apostle Paul addresses the church at Rome which was composed of Jews and gentiles. The Jews had been schooled under the Mosaic law and some were slow to grasp that the Old Testament restrictions that distinguished between clean and unclean animals had been removed by the death of Jesus on the cross (1 Ti. 4:3-5). Many of these believers also continued to observe many of the feasts and special observances from the law of Moses, not fully comprehending that all had been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ (Ro. 10:4; 1 Ti 1:5).

Many of the Gentile believers had come from paganism and no doubt were in need of instruction (Ac. 15:20,29). Paul speaks to both groups and urges them to quit their squabbling and to accept one another as brothers in the Lord.

Romans 14:4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

Jesus told us to judge not, lest we be judged (Lu. 6:37; Mt. 7:1). He also told us to get the beam out of our own eye before we attempt to remove a speck from our brother's eye (Lu. 6:41-42). That's a full time job in itself, isn't it?

Paul uses the analogy of servants in a household. We would be quite unwelcome and out of line to go to another's household and criticize the hired help. That is exactly what we do when we judge our brothers and sisters. We are all the Lord's servants and He is able to keep all of us from failing. He really doesn't need our help in that regard.

*Romans 14:7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.
8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.
Romans 14:9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*

Jesus bled on the cross to make us one with Him and with one another. His High Priestly in the garden was that we might be one just as He and His Father are one.

John 17:22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

*Romans 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.
11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. 12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

So why do I judge my brother and set him at naught over trivial differences that don't amount to a hill of beans? Who am I to judge the salvation of one who has been sealed by the Holy Ghost until the day of redemption (Eph. 1:14-15, 4:30)? I need to be more concerned with my future appointment at the judgment seat of Christ, where all the secret recesses of my heart will be opened wide for inspection by Jesus. What will my answer be if I'm found to be guilty of something for which I've condemned another.

James 2:13 For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

*Romans 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.
18 For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

The kingdom of God is a whole lot bigger than any of us can imagine or comprehend. Am I going to condemn another because he doesn't want to eat

meat? Am I going to condemn someone for observing Lent or other man made holy days? No! However, if the opportunity should present itself, it's always good, for all concerned, to reason the way of the Lord more perfectly (Ac. 23:20).

Pleasing Our Neighbor For His Edification

Last week we covered the difficulties that the Roman church was having in reconciling it's Jewish and Gentile factions.

There was strong disagreements over what was permissible to eat and which special days, if any, to observe. Whatever our convictions are on these matters, we are not to condemn and judge our brothers and sisters who are of a different persuasion. Paul continues the thought in the 15th chapter.

Romans 15:1 ¶ We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Most of us realize that one of the basic functions of the gospel is that it reveals the righteousness of God. We who are made righteous by the blood of Jesus, live and die with faith in what He accomplished for us on the cross. We know that we can't add anything to what Jesus has already done for us on the cross, in an effort to obtain salvation. We're saved by grace and grace alone (Ep. 1:8). Naturally, we strive to walk holy and sinless in the sight of God. Whether we eat meat or vegetables or regard or disregard particular days is of no real consequence to our soul's salvation.

Romans 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Our modern day divisions go far beyond dietary restrictions. We divide over doctrine, hair, dress, mode of worship, type of music, volume of music, church government, and the list goes on and on and on. Of course our divisions are very pleasing to the devil. They do nothing to promote the kingdom of God. Disagreements are inevitable, but we don't need to kill those with whom we disagree. As was stated last week, we all stand accountable to One Master, namely Christ Jesus.

Romans 15:2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. 3 For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

Paul quotes Psalms 89:51 which gives us the example of Jesus bearing the reproach of those who rejected His Father.

Psalms 89:51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

In Ephesians 2:11-13, Paul shows that we Gentiles at one time were strangers to God's covenant, without hope and without God in the world. However, we who were so far from God are now close to Him because of the blood of Calvary.

So, we don't have any reason to feel superior to any other believer, do we? We do however, like Aquila and Priscilla, have an obligation to reason the way of the Lord more perfectly to any who will hear, just as they did for Appolos (Ac. 18:24-26).

If it were not for Jesus who made Himself of no reputation to take on the nature of a Servant (Is. 52:13-15; Php. 2:5-11) and be made in the likeness of sinful man, where would we be? Lost and without God! Our names were written in the Lamb's book of Life (Lu. 10:20; Re. 18:8, 17:8), before we ever gave God a thought. Jesus went to the cross, bearing the reproach of every sin we had ever committed or were yet to commit. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities and He was chastised for our peace (Is. 53:5-9).

He did all that because He loved us (Jn. 3:16, 15:13). It pleased Him to be made like unto us that He might be our faithful and merciful High Priest between us and God (He. 2:14,17). Even now, He makes constant intercession on our behalf, at the throne of God (Ro. 8:34).

Our constant goal should be to love one another the way that Jesus loved us.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

Next week we'll conclude our study of Romans with this thought.

Romans 15:13 ¶ Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Abounding in Hope Through the Power of the Holy Spirit

Romans 15:13 ¶ Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The first mention of the Holy Spirit in scripture was when God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, void and covered with darkness. God spoke and said, "Let there be light and there was light (Ge. 1:1-3)." Following *The Principal of First Mention*, which is described as, "The first time a subject is mentioned in the word of God, you will find initial truths that will be applicable throughout all subsequent scriptures." We can readily apply the work of creation in this instance to the time that the Spirit of God hovered over the darkness of our barren heart and spoke Light and Life into our spiritual being.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The Light of God's eternal being (1 Ti. 6:16; 1 Jn. 1:3) illuminated the earth to the extent that vegetation flourished on the earth even before the sun was given its place in the universe. When the ages have finally culminated and we are gathered together around the throne of God, there will be no further need of the natural sun. The light of the glory of God will light His eternal city (Re. 21:23; 22:5).

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was not readily available to whomsoever will as He is today (Re. 22:17). The Spirit moved upon specific people for specified tasks that they were given to perform, such as when holy men of God were moved by the Holy Spirit to write the scriptures (2 Peter 1:21).

2 Peter 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake [as they were] moved by the Holy Ghost.

Isaiah prophesied of the Spirit's coming.

Isaiah 55:1 ¶ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

Ezekiel saw the Spirit as a mighty river, waters that could not be passed over. The flow started at ankle depth, progressed to the knee and then to the loins. Ultimately it was necessary to swim, because the river had become so big that it could not be crossed over (Ez. 47:5). So it is today. God never intended for us to be wading, He wants us to be swimming.

Paraphrasing John 14:16-18,26,16:7 Jesus promised a Comforter whom the Father would send in His name. The Comforter which proceeded out of the Father would abide with us forever. The Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, would testify of

Jesus. He would teach us all things and bring all of Jesus' commandments to our remembrance. The world could not receive the Comforter because they couldn't see Him. But the disciples knew Him because He was standing there talking to them in the face and person of Jesus. Jesus said, "He is dwelling with you and shall be in you. I won't leave you Comfortless, I will come to you."

The disciples would have to wait a bit for the Comforter to come, because it was necessary for Jesus to leave them. He assured them that, "If I depart, I will send him unto you."

The prophet Joel gave us God's promise that at some future date, He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-32). The apostle Peter quoted these scriptures to the inquiring crowd when the Spirit descended on the day of Pentecost saying, "This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel.....(Ac. 2:16-21."

At His ascension, Jesus told His disciples to wait at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. The Spirit would empower them to preach the gospel to the utter ends of the earth.

Luke 24:49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

It was necessary for Jesus to die, be resurrected and glorified, before He could send the Holy Spirit (Jn. 7:39). Peter told the crowd at Pentecost that the One whom they had crucified had been resurrected. God had exalted Him and seated Him at His own right hand, the place of power and authority. He was now both Lord and Christ. He having received the promise of the Father was now pouring it out upon men (Acts 2:33,36; 1 Co. 15:45; 2 Co. 3:17; Co. 2:9).

The Spirit fell at Pentecost while the disciples were in prayer and supplication (Ac. 1:14). That is still necessary today! After being filled with the Spirit, they possessed a boldness that they had never had before. Those who forsook Him and even denied Him in the judgment hall, went to the ends of the earth proclaiming that Jesus had risen and was now Lord of all. They had the audacity to preach that the only way to salvation was by believing on the name of Jesus (Ac. 4:12). Preaching such as that cost most of them their lives. If we preach the same message, it will cost us something also (Mt. 10:22).

Romans 15:13 ¶ Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,

that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

When Paul wrote this to the Roman church, storm clouds of persecution were forming against the infant church. It wouldn't be long before they would have to swear allegiance to Caesar or be put to death. Facing this, Paul urged them to put their trust in the God of Hope. Do we not see storm clouds rising today? How about the government trying to force religious businesses and institutions to provide abortion and contraceptive services against their conscience? In the argument before the Supreme Court concerning so called marriage equality, any voice of dissent is considered the voice of hate. Christianity and the supremacy of God's law, is openly mocked and considered archaic.

Our trust is in the God of hope. Our hope is not just wistful thinking but we have a firm confidence that God's church and kingdom will be established just as He has determined. The councils of hell will never prevail against it (Mt. 16:18).

We have joy and peace in believing the words of Jesus , because they are Spirit and Life.

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, [they] are spirit, and [they] are life.

Our joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Ga. 5:22). Because we have chosen to abide in Jesus the Vine (Jn. 15:1-11), our joy is filled to overflowing.

Isaiah 12:3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

Because we abide in Him, we have the peace that passes all understanding.

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

We have joy and peace in believing, because:

We know that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of God, whereby we are able to call Him Abba (daddy) Father (Ro. 8:15-16). Because we are sons, we are also heirs, joints heirs with Christ Jesus. We know that when we see Him, we

will be like Him for we'll see Him as He is (1 Jn. 3:2).

We have the promise that if we suffer with Him, we will also reign with Him (2 Ti. 2:12).

Yes, the winds of change are in the air, but we will continue to believe and abound in joy and peace through the power of the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

sRomans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Somebody Has Said

The primary source of the appeal of Christianity is Jesus – His incarnation, His life, His crucifixion, and His resurrection. K. Latourette