

One Hour in Romans

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Published and distributed by
Thru the Bible Radio Network
P.O. Box 7100
Pasadena, California 91109-7100
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www.ttb.org

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The Epistle to the Romans has been called the *magnum opus* of the apostle Paul. Martin Luther called it the “true masterpiece of the New Testament,” and William R. Newell declared, “Romans is the Gospel.” I personally believe that every believer ought to spend more time reading the Epistle to the Romans than any other portion of the Word of God. I long to be able to master, to a certain extent, the Epistle to the Romans. I have not arrived yet, I can assure you. But one of the reasons I love to teach it and preach from it is that I want to know more about this great epistle.

Now we want to look at the high points of it. Think of Romans in three major divisions:

- (1) Doctrinal, chapters 1-8
- (2) Dispensational, chapters 9-11
- (3) Duty, chapters 12-16

We will largely follow this outline, as it is an alliteration and easy to remember.

A salutation opens the Epistle to the Romans and a salutation closes it, acting very much like a parenthesis around the epistle. Paul was very personal in this epistle because he knew these folks in Rome.

Doctrinal

Justification of the Sinner

Paul opens the epistle with this great statement:

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

Revelation of the Sin of Man

Paul then spends approximately three chapters showing that man is a sinner. Sin is the subject from chapter 1:18 through 3:20. Notice that he does not attempt to prove that man is a sinner, he just makes it as a statement of fact. In other words, it is a revelation.

That God’s wrath is revealed against sin is an historical fact. Just to cite one instance, Sodom and Gomorrah were cities destroyed by God because of their sin. They reached the place of perversion which is always characteristic of a degraded civilization. America, by the way, has come to that place today. It is at that time that God gives them up, that God judges a nation. You go back and read the history of Greece – the literature of Greece became extremely vile toward the end, like our literature today – and you will find that God gave them up. Now when you read Romans 1:18-33, you are apt to get this impression: *My, that’s certainly not a picture of me, and I can thoroughly agree with God.*

But wait! Next we have the revelation of the sin of good people. That is something that is difficult for a great many people to accept, so Paul deals with it. He says:

Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. (Romans 2:1)

Now he does not mean that these respectable people or good people do the identical things. What he is saying is simply this: The minute you and I take the position of judging folk who are in sin, we immediately establish the principle that whoever is above us can judge us also for not measuring up to their standards. You see, when you look down on skid row at the drunkard or the pervert today and say that his sin is abhorrent, that it is a terrible thing – the very minute You say that – God in His position as He looks down at you, a so-called respectable person, can say (which He does), “You are a sinner, and you have come short of My glory. You, in My sight, are just as much a sinner as that person is in your sight.” That is exactly what Paul is attempting to establish here.

Now he puts down certain principles by which God is going to judge good people:

But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth [reality] against them who commit such things. (Romans 2:2)

God is going to judge according to the facts. You will not be able to secure a lawyer and claim some technicality. When you come before God, He judges you according to reality. He knows your heart, and He knows it better than you know your own heart. You and I cannot claim the thing that we often claim before other people: “Oh, I’m innocent. I’m a nice, sweet citizen. I pay my honest debts. I never even get a traffic ticket.” Well, may I say to you, you may not get a traffic ticket, but in God’s sight you are a sinner, my friend, and God will judge you according to reality, not according to some defense you are able to hatch up nor some technicality. That is the first principle.

The second principle is this:

Who will render to every man according to his deeds. (Romans 2:6)

God is going to judge you according to your deeds. That is the thing that will be put before Him at the Great White Throne. We are told that His books will be opened and every sinner will be judged according to his works – not those little good things you like calling attention to, but your entire life will be scrutinized. God is going to judge you according to the facts.

And then the third thing:

For there is no respect of persons with God. (Romans 2:11)

The fact that you happen to be educated and have been brought up surrounded by a good environment gives you no advantage over that poor illiterate out yonder. God is going to judge you and him by the same standard. There is no respect of persons. You see, what Paul is talking about here is not the basis on which God *saves* men but the basis on which God *judges* men. He is not even discussing salvation here. He is discussing the basis on which God judges the human family.

He continues with the fourth principle:

For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. (Romans 2:13)

It is not the fact that you’ve heard the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments and you think they’re wonderful. The question is, do you keep them?

I was speaking several years ago before one of these knife-and-fork clubs on a Good Friday. I sat next to a man who asked me, "What's your racket?" I told him, "I'm a preacher." Immediately he began to cover up. He told me that he was an officer in a certain church and about all the good he did, and he said, "I want you to know that the Sermon on the Mount is my religion."

I reached over and shook hands with him. "I want to congratulate you. That's the best religion I know anything about."

"I thought you'd think so."

"But I'd like to ask you a question. How're you doing with it?"

He began to fumble for words. "What do you mean?"

"You say that's your religion. I want to know, are you keeping it?"

"Well, I try to."

"But that's not it. Religion is not something you try out. If that's your religion, I hope you're keeping it."

"I'm doing my best."

"But I can't find anything in there about doing your best."

"Well now, I feel that a man, you know, ought to do his best."

"Yes, I think so, too, but does your best enable you to keep the Sermon on the Mount? Let me be specific. It says in there that if you are angry with your brother, you are guilty of murder. Are you a murderer? Have you ever been angry with anyone?" He had to admit that he had been. "Also," I said, "if you so much as look upon a woman to lust after her, you're guilty of adultery. How are you doing with that one?" He began to hedge, and I said, "Look, if I were you, I'd change my religion because you are not keeping it. You'd better get yourself a religion you can keep, brother, because you're doing nothing with that one at all."

May I say to you, friend, when folk say the Sermon on the Mount is their religion, all they mean is, "I just vote for the Sermon on the Mount. I think it's a nice thing." It's God's Law for this earth during the Millennium; it's a wonderful Law, and it is His standard. You and I, if we look at our hearts, know that we cannot measure up to it. Even the respectable people know they do not measure up to it. Therefore, God is going to judge us on this basis: not on being hearers of the Law but *doers* of the Law. When you get up before God and say, "Well, I kept the Ten Commandments," He's going to ask you one by one, "Did you keep this one?" May I say to you, that is God's standard, but any honest person *knows* that he comes short of the glory of God.

And then the fifth principle by which God will judge good people is:

Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another. (Romans 2:15)

You, at this moment, have a conscience (if you are just a religious person and just a respectable person) that either excuses you or accuses you. It is doing one of the two with you. It will excuse you, as in the case of this man I mentioned who said, "I do the best I can." He is excusing himself. He says, "Well, after all, we're all human." And I can't think of a truer statement than that! We *are* human and that is the reason we are falling short. That is the very thing that Paul is saying here.

The sixth principle is this:

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. (Romans 2:16)

God is going to bring out the secrets at the judgment. That part of your life that you have kept hidden, God intends to bring out – provided you do not come and accept His salvation. He is going to turn you wrong side out; He is really going to look at you when you come before Him. I certainly agree with Irwin Moon whom I heard say years ago, “If God put my life on the screen and I had to sit there and look at it, I’d make a hole in the wall to get out of there. I don’t want to see it.” And I don’t think you want to see yours. But if you turn down God’s salvation, you *do* have to face Him on this matter, and these six principles outline the way He will judge so-called good people.

Now there is another class of people: those who think they are going to escape judgment because they are religious. Of course, the Jewish people illustrate this for the simple reason that they had the only God-given religion. He tells them what they have: “You have the Mosaic Law; you have been an instructor of the people; you have *boasted* yourself of this; but as you have been teaching others not to steal, do you steal?” And that, I think, is the tragedy of liberalism today. It tries to teach other people to be moral and ethical, and yet in and of itself it is neither moral nor ethical. It is so easy to tell other people what they should do. God finds the religious person the most difficult person in the world to reach. Church members are the hardest people in the world to lead to Christ.

If our radio ministry has done one thing, it has reached in and touched church members. Many of them have told us that they finally saw themselves as sinners lost before Almighty God. A family in San Pedro, California, listened to the Epistle to the Romans for three months as we hammered away – “You’re a sinner; you’re a sinner; you’re a sinner.” They resented it and wrote me two angry letters: “We are church members, we are active in the church, and you tell us we are sinners! We are tired of hearing it.” Well, I didn’t tell them they could tune us out, and apparently they kept listening. Finally, that entire family came to know Christ. I tell you, you can be religious and still be lost.

Paul sums up all of this by bringing against the human family *fourteen charges*, and six of these are the charges of a judge. Then the judge turns over sinful humanity to the Great Physician, and the Great Physician says that we’re sick nigh unto death. That is the condition of mankind.

Not only does the Word of God say that, but it is interesting to see how pagans many times have arrived at the same conclusion.

- Seneca, the Roman philosopher, said, “We must say of ourselves that we are evil, have been evil, and – unhappily, I must add – shall be also in the future. Nobody can deliver himself; someone must stretch out a hand to lift him up.”
- It was Goethe, the great German, who said, “I see no fault committed which I, too, might not commit.”
- Dr. Samuel Johnson, the great literary light of eighteenth century England, said, “Every man knows that of himself which he dares not tell his dearest friend.”
- And Tholuck, a great teacher in Germany, at the fiftieth anniversary of his professorship in Halle University, was tendered a banquet at which he was asked what he was most grateful for. He said, “In review of God’s manifold blessings, the thing I seem most to thank Him for is the conviction of sin.”

And I would say that the saint with the most tender conscience today is more aware of sin than anything else.

When you get to the place where you are not conscious of sin in your life, my friend, you are in a dangerous position. You are like the man in the frozen North who thought he was getting comfortable but was actually freezing to death. A man in that state wants to lie down in the snow and sleep; but the minute he does so he will die. A great many people today are numb, unconscious of the fact that they are sinners in God's sight. It was John Dennys, the English poet, who used the mythological stories of the labors of Hercules where the strong man cleaned out the Aegean stables. Well, Hercules was able to do it, but Dennys wrote this: "Lord, I confess that Thou alone art able to purify this Aegean stable, be the sea's water and all the lands soaked, yet if Thy blood not wash me, there is no hope."

Revelation of the Righteousness of God

Then Paul brings on this great subject of salvation, of how God today is saving sinners. Notice this:

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference. (Romans 3:21, 22)

Paul is simply saying that man is helpless and hopeless – he is paralyzed and absolutely unable to save himself. But God has moved onto the scene, and He has provided a righteousness that will enable man to stand before God.

Righteousness Provided

The way God provides this righteousness is not by man's working for it, not by man's paying for it, not by man's getting it on the installment plan with the idea that he will pay later, but that God *gives* it to him. Man can receive it only by faith. Let me use this simple illustration: I am wearing a watch given to me by members of my board several years ago. It is a very lovely watch and I'll never have to wind it – all I do is just look at the time. It was handed to me in a little box with the words, "This is a gift." I have never paid one penny for this watch. All I had to do was believe that they were honest and sincere in offering it to me, and when they held it out, I held my hand out by faith and took it. That is the only way in the world you can get saved today, because salvation is a *gift*. You can't work for a gift; you can't pay for a gift; you can't promise God anything. If you are going to receive His gift, you will have to reach out your hand of faith and receive what God has to offer.

Now that gift comes through Jesus Christ. It comes through His death upon the cross and the redemption that He wrought for us. Paul tells us the reason for this:

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

There is no exception in the human family – we are all sinners.

Now that doesn't mean that there is no difference in sinners. There is a lot of difference in sinners – some are worse than others, and God recognizes that. But I have found when flying

over a rugged area that when I look down from that elevation I can't tell the height of the hills. In fact, when you get up that high, you can't tell a molehill from an anthill from a mountain. They all look the same when you get up there. When God looks down at you, my friend, though you may think you are head and shoulders above somebody else, you are on the same level – “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

I have an old illustration about the game of “jumping to Catalina,” an island located here in Southern California. It is about 25 miles directly across to Catalina from the pier in Santa Monica. Let's suppose that we get to the pier and we run and jump off the end to see who can jump to Catalina. Now up to the present, nobody has made it. There have been some mighty good jumps, and it's a delightful game because when you jump, you get wet, and you can say to the other fellow, “I jumped farther than you did.” And it is true – some jump farther. I see some people who sure could out-jump me, but I'll tell you this: if you do, you'll get wetter than I will. The farther you jump the wetter you will get, but you won't make Catalina. All come short of Catalina, although some jump farther than others. “All come short of the glory of God.” Although some are not as great sinners as others, none has measured up to His standards. For that reason you and I today need His redemption.

Being justified freely [without a cause; that is, the cause is not within us] ***by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*** (Romans 3:24)

What God does, He does by His grace; what God does by His grace, He does joyfully. He does it freely; He does it without holding back. God doesn't parcel out this matter of grace as if it were something so rare that He has to stint Himself on it because He might run out of His supply. My friend, when He bestows grace on you, He goes the limit. He is not parsimonious. He bestows His grace and His love upon you freely without a cause, and it's all “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” So when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ,

Your best resolutions must wholly be waived,
Your highest ambitions be crossed;
You never need think you will ever be saved,
'Til first you've learned you are lost.

If today I had the wisdom of Solomon, the patience of Job, the meekness of Moses, the strength of Samson, the obedience of Abraham, the compassion of Joseph, the tears of Jeremiah, the poetic skill of David, the prophetic voice of Elijah, the courage of Daniel, the greatness of John the Baptist, and the endurance and love of Paul, I would still need redemption through Christ's blood – the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.

My friend, today you and I need the blood of Christ for our salvation – there is no other hope for us at all. That cross is the way God has saved individuals from the very beginning, from the days of Abel outside the Garden of Eden down to the very present hour – because Paul says here:

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. (Romans 3:25)

The “sins that are past” are not *your* past sins but sins committed

before Christ's death on the cross. God has never had but one way of saving sinners and that is through the cross of Jesus Christ. Everyone that God ever saved in the Old Testament, He saved on credit. He did not save them because they brought a little lamb. That little lamb represented their faith; that little lamb represented Jesus Christ. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin but pointed to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christ died on the cross, that was the payment that made it possible for God to redeem those who had lived in the past. And by faith today you and I look back to Him for our salvation.

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. (Romans 3:26)

Now Paul gives us something that is quite wonderful: two illustrations of justification by faith. He gives us Abraham, who was justified by faith before the Law, and David, who was justified by faith under the Law.

Paul says that Abraham believed God, and then makes this statement:

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans 4:5)

This, my friend, is one of the greatest statements in the Word of God. "But to Him that worketh not..." Oh, I wish today that I could burn that into your conscience.

But to him that worketh not...

"Oh, but I ought to do something."

But to him that worketh not...

"Well, don't you think that I ought to join the church and be baptized?"

But to him that worketh not...

"Then shouldn't I promise God that I'm going to live a better life?"

But to him that worketh not...

"But don't you think that we ought to somehow offer God something?"

But to him that worketh not...

That means that you cannot work for your salvation. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth" – who? Good people? No – "the ungodly," the worst kind of people. This is the only kind of people God is saving – ungodly people. God has never yet saved a good person. Never yet. You couldn't mention one. Not only has God never saved a good person, He never will save a good person. Do you know why? Because none is good. People just don't come in that category. Goodness is not the mark of man in God's sight. All are ungodly. The Lord Jesus says, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). He came to "give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). For what kind of folk? Ungodly people, if you please.

Now I don't want to be unlovely, but I do want to make this statement with all the force I can muster. If you have never come to God as a sinner for salvation, you are not saved today. Until you come as a sinner to God, He cannot save you. He is in the business of saving *sinners*. That's the only kind. There are a lot of people who, if they could maintain their dignity and their status (and they do want some status symbol today), then they would let God save them. My

friend, when you come to Him you have to come to Him as the sinner you are. He is saving only ungodly people.

Paul uses Abraham as an illustration. Abraham simply believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. For it is not only the subtraction of sins in justification by faith, but it is the addition of the righteousness of Christ which enables you to stand in His presence.

It was John Bunyan who said, “When God showed me John Bunyan as God saw John Bunyan, I no longer confessed I was a sinner, but I confessed I was sin from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet.” And, my friend, that’s the way God sees you this very minute. He sees you as a lost, undone sinner.

Now I recognize this is not popular teaching today. Even in fundamental circles this type of preaching is going out of style fast because people want to hear something that tickles their ears. But God still says you must come to Him as a sinner because that is what you are. You don’t put on airs with Him; you don’t offer Him any status symbol. He tells you who you are, my friend, and we come on *His* terms and His terms alone. The Lord Jesus said, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

Justification by faith is no “pie in the sky by and by.” Paul says that this marvelous thing of being justified by faith produces results in this life. He explains it; he illustrates it; he also shows that it gives results. He enumerates eight wonderful things that are right here and now the possession of every believer – and there is something wrong if you don’t have them.

1. Peace with God:

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)

“Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” is the peace that comes to the soul of one who has trusted Christ as Savior and knows that God no longer has any charge against him and that his salvation is eternal. That is wonderful peace!

2. Access to God:

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.... (Romans 5:2)

As God’s children, we have access to a Heavenly Father who will listen to us. It is wonderful having someone to go to and talk with about our problems. He always hears and answers, and sometimes He shows He is a good Heavenly Father by saying no. He answers according to His wisdom, not according to our will.

3. Hope:

...And rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:2)

The child of God has a *hope* and that is the blessed hope of the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

4. Triumph in trouble:

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope. (Romans 5:3, 4)

The world does not join together the two words, “affliction” and “joy,” but the child of God can boast of the discipline of God. He knows that if God has permitted trouble to come to him, it is for his good and God’s glory.

5. Love:

What kind of love? Love for our fellow man? No. That’s elsewhere.

...The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.... (Romans 5:5)

This does not mean our love for God, but God’s love for us; that is, the assurance that God loves us. These are desperate days and we need to know that God loves us.

6. The Holy Spirit:

...The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us. (Romans 5:5)

The Holy Spirit is the One who, among other things, actualizes or makes real the love of God in the hearts of believers. Today we need to be conscious of the fact that God loves us.

7. Deliverance from wrath:

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

What is this wrath from which we will be saved? It is what Jesus called the Great Tribulation. Believers have been saved from the penalty of sin; He is constantly saving us from the power of sin; and He is going to save us in the future from the presence of sin. This means that every believer will leave this earth at the Rapture. We are saved from wrath through Christ.

8. Joy:

And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation. (Romans 5:11)

The final benefit is joy. We joy in *God!* He has worked out a plan to save us because of His love for us. These are eight wonderful benefits of salvation. Let’s rejoice in God!

Sanctification of the Saint

Now Paul moves out of this area into another area: sanctification. Being justified by faith, we have now come to the place where God sanctifies us. After all, justification does not change our hearts; we're still the same kind of persons. Therefore, God wants to move into our lives and sanctify us, make us better people than we are. And His method, of course, is through the Holy Spirit. Paul presents this in a very wonderful way.

Potential Sanctification

First of all Paul shows us potential sanctification:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned. (Romans 5:12)

Now when he says, "All have sinned," he's not talking about our acts of sin. Rather he's referring to the sin that Adam committed when he disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden which, he says, is your sin and my sin. Immediately someone will resent that. He will say, "Why should I be charged with Adam's sin? I don't want Adam being the one to choose for me. I want to make the choice." Well, my friend, whether you like it or not, it just so happens that the choice of your ancestors turns out to be your choice as well.

I had a grandfather who lived in Northern Ireland. He was a Scotsman and, believe me, he knew what persecution was. He left Northern Ireland and came to Georgia; he didn't like Georgia either – grandfather was a hard fellow to please – so he went on over to Mississippi to live and finally ended up in Texas, for that's where he's buried. May I say to you, years ago when he decided to come to the United States, I came to the United States. That's when I came. His decision was my decision. Whether I like it or not (and I like it) he came to this country. I'm glad he didn't stay in Northern Ireland, because if he had I'd be over there today. I'm glad that he came to this country; his decision was my decision.

Adam's decision is our decision whether we like it or not. That was God's way in order that He might justify you and me by faith, if you please. That is the basis of sanctification because now He is enabled to take us out of the old Adam and put us in the new Adam. That new Adam is the Lord Jesus Christ. We are put in Him by faith, and that is the method by which God is able to sanctify us today.

Positional Sanctification

Then Paul talks about positional sanctification. This is one of the most debated and controversial passages in the Scripture:

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

And here's God's answer: "God forbid" or, "Let it not be." If you think that because you are saved by grace you can live in sin, you are not saved, my friend. It is very obvious here that Paul is making that clear – "Let it not be." If you have been saved by the grace of God, you will not

go on living in sin. You have been given a new nature. He tells us three things that must be ours if we are to be sanctified.

1. First of all, we are to know something:

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

A literal translation would be: Are you ignorant that so many of us who were identified into union with Jesus Christ were identified in His death?

2. Then we are to identify with something:

Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death.... (Romans 6:4)

This verse has nothing in the world to do with water; rather, it has to do with identification. The word “baptize” means identification with something. We are identified with Christ. When Christ died over 1900 years ago, I died; and you died if you are in Christ today. When He was raised from the dead, you and I were raised from the dead so that now we are in a new Head of the human race. That new Head of the human race is the Lord Jesus Christ.

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. (Romans 6:6)

“Knowing this” – these are things we know. When Paul says your “old man” is crucified with Him, he doesn’t mean your father; he means your old nature is crucified with Him. “That the body of sin might be destroyed.” (The word “destroyed” is the Greek *katargeo*, meaning to make of none effect, to be paralyzed or canceled or nullified.) “That henceforth we should not serve sin.” Paul is not saying that the old nature is eradicated. He is saying that since the old man was crucified, the body of sin has been put out of business so that from now on we should not be in bondage to sin.

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. (Romans 6:8)

Let me repeat that when He died over 1900 years ago, we died with Him.

3. Now we are to reckon on something. He says here,

Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. (Romans 6:11)

You are to reckon (count) on this fact. If you came to me today and told me that you deposited \$1,000 for me in the local bank and you handed me a checkbook, may I say to you, I could carry that checkbook around till my dying day and not use it if I did not

reckon on it or count on it. But when you told me that, I would count on its being on deposit. I'd say, "I have \$1,000 in that bank over there," and I would write out a check. May I say to you, that's what it means to reckon on it.

Now count on the fact that God has put you in Christ and that you are now in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are no longer to live in the old nature, but we are to live in Christ – just as a bird lives in the air and a fish lives in the water.

Practical Sanctification

Now may I say that this is not only positional sanctification; it is practical sanctification.

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (Romans 6:13)

When you are saved, you are given a new nature, and that new nature enables you to be obedient to God. The thing that Paul is saying here is that you and I are to obey God. Obedience is now the mark of this child of God. Lawlessness on the part of those today who claim to be Christians reveals whose they are. Lawlessness is not a mark of a believer at all. If you are a believer, you are not lawless; you are obedient to Him. The reason that my favorite hymn is "Trust and Obey" is because these two go together:

When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way.
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.

You see, if you trust Him for your salvation, you will be given a new nature so that you can be obedient to Him. That old nature you have is a spiritual Bolshevik; it is in rebellion against God. But you have a new nature if you are God's child and you will want to be obedient to Him.

Powerless Sanctification

Now Paul shows in Romans 7 that you and I cannot be obedient in our own strength. It is powerless sanctification. There are two great truths that come out of this. The first one is:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.... (Romans 7:18)

You and I have nothing good in our flesh. The old nature can never do anything that is pleasing to God. The fact of the matter is, Paul says,

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

You and I have an old nature – even if you are redeemed you have that old nature – and it will be with you until your dying day. That old nature is in rebellion against God. For instance, sometimes you don't want to hear the teaching of the Word of God, you just have to somehow bring yourself to it. It is amazing what that old nature can think of to rebel against God. It hates the Word of God; it doesn't love to pray. That old nature is in rebellion against Almighty God. Did you ever have those feelings?

But if you are a believer, you have a new nature, and Paul says this concerning it:

...For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. (Romans 7:18)

Paul found out that there was no good in his old nature and that there was no power in his new nature.

God's New Provision for Sanctification

Now this is where God moves on the scene, and we have God's new provision for sanctification.

There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus....
(Romans 8:1)

That is, chapter 7 of Romans describes Paul's failure when he was a believer. I think this took place when he was first converted after the Damascus Road experience. He found failure in the Christian life. But even then there was no condemnation because he was in Christ. It did not disturb or wreck his salvation at all, but he was not happy. There was no joy, no power in his life.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 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, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:2-4)

Believers have a new nature, but it has no power. You cannot live for God in your own strength. It is only as you and I come and yield to Him, it is only as you and I will obey Him, that we can be well pleasing to Him. It is only by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that you and I can live for God. Now Paul makes that extremely clear:

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. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (Romans 8:5, 6)

If you are to have life and peace – that is, a Christian life filled with the fruits of the Holy Spirit – it must be by the power of the Holy Spirit. You can never achieve them on your own.

Let me illustrate in a personal way. That Vernon McGee! I know this fellow (I've known him for a long time) and I want to tell you very candidly that I'm sick of him. He has failed me; he has let me down so many times. I know that whatever *he* produces God can't use – he just *cannot* use it.

That which is of the flesh is nothing in the world but an abomination unto God. But that which the Holy Spirit can and will produce – God will use that, my friend. It is the only thing that's worthwhile, the only thing that has any eternal value. This is the reason Paul develops that fact in chapter 8.

Paul concludes the doctrinal section of Romans by talking about the believer's security in this life.

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. (Romans 8:28)

It doesn't make any difference what comes to you – good things, bad things, dark things, bright things, lovely things, mean things – because whatever comes to you, God will see to it that it works for good in your life. You can be sure of that. It is something that the child of God needs to hold onto.

Not only that, but God says that during all of this, “I can hold onto you, because when I started out with you, I not only foreknew you, but I predestined you; and when I predestined you, I called you; and when I called you, I justified you; and when I justified you, I glorified you” (see Romans 8:29, 30). In other words, God says, “When I called you, I knew I could carry you through to the end. It won't depend on your performance. It will depend on Me.” And I say very candidly that if I don't make it through, it's going to be God's failure and not mine. I'm already a failure but He is not nor will He be. Paul says, “Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

Therefore –

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

What a glorious, wonderful thing this is. Why is it true? Well, “Who is he that condemneth?” Who can condemn a child of God? Christ died for us, He is risen again, He is even at the right hand of God, and He makes intercession for us. My beloved, can you have anything better than that in this life or in the life to come? He is on your side today. You can't lose – because of Him, not because of you. He has already declared you bankrupt and a failure and a sinner. But He says, “I am undertaking to see you through; I am undertaking to save you.”

Then we come to this important question:

What shall separate us from the love of Christ? (Romans 8:35)

In the remainder of this chapter, Paul names just about everything – if you can think of anything he didn't name, you can include that also. But this is what he concludes, “For I am persuaded that none of these things can possibly separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.” This is God's glorious salvation.

Dispensational

Now the Jew will step up and say (and would have in Paul's day), "But, Paul, we have the Old Testament, and in the Old Testament we know that God had a plan and a purpose for our nation. Has this wonderful plan of salvation nullified God's plan for our nation?" Paul says, "No."

God's Past Dealings with Israel

First of all, Paul lets us know here in chapter 9 who these people are:

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.
(Romans 9:4)

He speaks of God's past dealings with Israel, and he identifies them. They are not Anglo-Saxon nor any so-called lost tribe. They happen to be Jews, my friend, and you cannot in any way disturb or destroy that. I think that the silliest thing of all the silly things taught by the cults is British Israelism. I've just never quite understood how people could go into that sort of thing unless it's prompted by egotism, of wanting to feel that they are the chosen people.

Well, it is true that if we have been saved, we are chosen in Christ; we are elect in Christ today, but not because of some natural heritage that we might have. Paul is speaking about Israelites, and he identifies them as such. They were the race that Christ came from, if you please. He was an Israelite. They were the ones to whom God gave a religion.

God's Present Purpose with Israel

Now God has a purpose for the nation of Israel. What is His present plan, right today, for that nation? Listen to Paul:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. (Romans 10:1)

They, today, are as lost as any Gentile is lost because they cannot be saved by religion. Religion won't save anybody. Even with a God-given religion, they are as far from God as anyone is. They need to be saved as Paul says, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Just as Gentiles are saved, Jews are saved also. May I say to you, God is saving them today. God's present plan is that they be saved and brought into the body of believers, the church (see Ephesians 2:11-22).

God's Future Purpose with Israel

But wait a minute. Does that destroy God's plan for the future? No. After God gets through with His plan for the church, Paul says,

I say, then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew.... (Romans 11:1, 2)

Paul makes it quite evident here that as soon as God consummates His plan for the church, of calling out of both Jew and Gentile a people to His name and takes the church out of the earth, He will return again to the nation Israel and begin to deal with them.

That, my friend, is the dispensational section.

Duty

Now we come to the duty section, and I'm going to be brief here. But I want you to notice that Paul is very practical with all of this. In chapter 12 and through the rest of the epistle he deals with a believer's duty in the various relationships encountered in daily living.

Service of the Children of God

First of all, in chapters 12 and 13 is that which is known as Christian service. A child of God is in this world today, and since he's in this world he has a duty; he has a relationship to God.

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. (Romans 12:1)

Here we have the Christian's relationship to God; he presents himself a living sacrifice. That is his spiritual service. And may I pause to say this: I do not believe that a child of God can live unto himself. Paul makes it very clear that if you have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, God has a claim on your life. I'm afraid we are not getting that over to young people today and, as a result, we have some of the most miserable so-called "Christian" young people. The reason is that they are living selfish lives. They are talking in terms of themselves, and God is not in it. He says, and this is the first step, that you cannot even live the Christian life until you present your total personality as a living sacrifice unto God.

Then you have a relationship to the gifts of the Spirit, and there *are* gifts of the Spirit – many more than speaking in tongues. In fact, Paul doesn't even mention tongues in this section because he is talking about that which is quite serviceable. He mentions these gifts: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, and showing mercy (see Romans 12:6-8).

Next Paul speaks of our relationship to other believers. Now I'm going to quote from a version that I do not recommend to you at all, and I'll tell you why. No one who does not understand Greek ought to use the Revised Standard Version under any circumstance. But I'm going to quote from it because I've checked the Greek to make sure this passage has been translated correctly, and it happens to be a helpful rendering:

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be

patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. (Romans 12:9-13 REVISED STANDARD VERSION)

Isn't this a marvelous injunction that God gives to believers today? And it has to do with our relationship to the gifts of the Spirit and to other believers, if you please.

Then we have a relationship to unbelievers, those outside of Christ. We are to

Recompense to no man evil for evil.... (Romans 12:17)

We are not to avenge ourselves. The minute that you and I attempt to punch the other fellow in the nose after he has punched us in the nose, we are no longer walking by faith. "Well," somebody says, "I think somebody ought to punch him in the nose." Yes, you are right, somebody ought to. But let *God* punch him in the nose. God says He intends to do it. You say, "Do you mean He *says* that?" Yes, He does:

...Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (Romans 12:19)

In effect, God says, "I will not permit any injustice to come to you that I will not straighten out someday. Now do not depart from the pathway of faith – don't hit back." The minute you and I hit back we are saying to Him, "God, I can't trust You in this particular case. I'm going to have to take it into my own hands."

Let's turn vengeance over to God. My beloved, when we do, that's when we heap coals of fire on those who are our enemies. Believe me, when God starts dealing with them He's going to do a good job of it. I have watched that in my ministry. Oh, how many times I have wanted to take things into my own hands! But when I let God take over, I've seen Him move in. And I want to tell you, He does a lot better job than any of us down here would do in dealing with folk. Turn them over to the Lord – that's what our attitude should be toward unbelievers.

Then we have a relationship to government. A dear lady in my congregation called on the phone and asked, "Do you think a Christian ought to vote?" Of course we ought to vote! We have a real relationship to government today. We are to obey the powers that be, and

...The powers that be are ordained of God. (Romans 13:1)

We're almost inclined to say, "But, Brother Paul, could you say that if you lived in the day in which I live with this crowd of politicians in office?" Well, you must remember that in Paul's day bloody Nero was on the throne in Rome, and Paul had even appealed his case to him. Despite the conditions that prevailed in his day he could say, "You are to be obedient to the powers that be, for the powers that be are ordained of God" – whether it's bloody Nero or whoever is in office in your day. We have a relationship to government.

We also have a relationship to our neighbors (see Romans 13:8-10). This is where the Ten Commandments come in, by the way.

Separation of the Children of God

Now we come to that matter of separation, if you please. Separation is something that is certainly misunderstood among believers today because most of them have made up a nice little list of commandments that they attempt to follow. There are generally about a hundred little

commandments of “don’t do this, don’t do that, don’t do the other thing.” That, may I say to you, is not Christian conduct by any means.

Paul puts down three great principles of conduct.

Conviction

Conviction is first of all. Whatever you do, you are to do it with conviction. Notice:

One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. (Romans 14:5)

Now, what day are you to observe – Saturday or Sunday or not any day? Well, whatever you do, be fully persuaded in your own mind. You are to have a *conviction* about what you do.

Our problem today in this matter of separation is not solely a problem of young people but of all age groups engaging in activities that are unacceptable. The problem is that they haven’t anything in their hearts to take the place of these things they are told to give up. And that’s the reason you find them going in all different directions, engaging in all types of questionable activities.

May I say to you, you have to have a conviction about your conduct – a real conviction. I get so tired of these namby-pamby Christians who go to these nice little Christian functions in a half-hearted sort of way, straddling the fence, trying to go with the world and trying to go with God. Have conviction about what you do! And do whatever you do with conviction.

The world does that. I have always watched this crowd that comes to the New Year’s Day football game at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena. They come with conviction. They come wearing their particular team’s buttons. I see the crowd from Wisconsin or Minnesota, and when I go to the Rose Parade, I like to kid them about the game – and believe me, you can get a rise out of someone wearing a button! I said to a couple of them one time, “I didn’t even know they had a team back there this year.” Oh, I said the wrong thing! Why, this couple wanted to pull me off the ladder on which I was perched to view the parade. They didn’t want me to make a statement like that at all. May I say to you, I like that. That’s conviction, my friend. Oh, if Christians today only had conviction!

Do you know the reason they fill up the Rose Bowl every New Year’s Day? It’s because of those who go there with conviction. The rest of the crowd go because the others have conviction. I’m convinced that half the people who attend games do not know a football from a baseball. In one group the people are so drunk they can’t tell the difference, and another group is like the lady who was sitting behind me the last time I was there. When the boy from Wisconsin threw a pass she asked, “Who hit the ball?” My, how disturbing it is to hear anyone make a statement like that at a football game! She didn’t know a thing about the game. Why in the world was she there? Because the crowd was there.

My friend, you may have a fine Sunday night congregation at your church, but let me tell you that if the members of your church had *real* conviction about going to church, the place would be packed out. That is what we need today – Christians who have conviction. It is the first thing that is needed in Christian conduct.

Conscience

Conscience is the second great principle of conduct:

Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. (Romans 14:22)

Do you look back on your life today or this week and hate yourself for what you have done? Well, I don't know what you did wrong, but happy is the man who doesn't condemn himself with what he does. That's the reason I don't answer questions like this: "Do you think, Dr. McGee, that it's wrong for a Christian to do such and such?" The answer is easy. For you it's wrong because you have a conscience about it. Otherwise you never would have asked. I never have been asked, "Do you think I ought to eat supper tonight?" Nobody has a conscience on that, you see, but they ask only about that on which they have a conscience. I like to say to some of them, "Well, apparently for you it is wrong – you've got a conscience on it or you wouldn't have asked me. You can't go. But I don't have a conscience on it – so let me have your ticket!"

May I say to you, my beloved, we need to have a conscience on these things. And when we have to look back at what we've done and raise a question – regardless of what it was – it was wrong. And it's also wrong if you can't enter into it whole-heartedly. "...Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

Consideration

Consideration is the third and last of these great principles:

We, then, that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification. (Romans 15:1, 2)

That is what consideration of others is, and it is something that ought to affect a great many Christians in their conduct. Maybe you have a conviction about this or that and you can do it, and maybe your conscience doesn't condemn you for doing it. But have you ever stopped to think what effect it might have on somebody else? There is always the other person to be taken into consideration. And may I say this to you: A Christian does not please himself; he pleases his Lord. It is not a question today of whether it's right or wrong – that is not the standard of the Christian anymore – it is a question of walking in the light. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth [keeps on cleansing] us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

It is not *how* you walk, it is *where* you walk that counts. Are you walking in the light? Are you attempting to please Him? That is what is important. It is not to see how far you can go in doing questionable things and still maintain a Christian testimony. If that is the way you are living, may I say, you are living a shabby, shoddy Christian life today.

Now, does this thing that we've been talking about work? Is it something that has reality?

Paul closes the Epistle to the Romans by mentioning thirty-five people by name who lived among pagans in the Roman Empire under the rule of bloody Nero. These people walked in the light of God's Word down the streets of Ephesus, Jerusalem, Athens, Corinth, Thessalonica, and Rome itself. These thirty-five people in a pagan civilization found that this epistle was true, and they lived for Christ in the first century.

It not only worked in the first century, but it worked in the second century, it worked in the third, the fourth, the fifth and the sixth, and it continues to work in this century, my friend. There are Christians today who, like those in the first century, are walking the streets of this

pagan world. Those who know Jesus Christ and are walking in the light as He is in the light have found out that these things Paul wrote about are true.

The question is, have *you* found out that they are true? Or is this all theory to you, something that is only an ideal? I say to you right now that you can know whether these things are true or not. The Lord Jesus said that if you will do His will, you will know His doctrine, you will know whether it's true or not (see John 7:17). Like the psalmist says, "Oh taste and see that the LORD is good..." (Psalm 34:8). God wants you to make the experiment. It all begins at the cross, in a transaction with Him – it all begins when you come to Christ as your Savior.