



NewLife Series
EVANGELISM, DISCIPLESHIP, MISSIONS
English, Tagalog & Cebuano Versions.

By Pastor Bien Llobrera

BOOK 11

STUDIES IN ROMANS

INTRODUCTION

The book of Romans is about the Gospel as the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Salvation is more than just gaining heaven and escaping hell. Salvation for the sinner ultimately means being transformed into the very image of God's own Son. For all creation salvation means the total banishment of sin with all of its destructive effects and the ushering in of a perfect new heaven and a new earth.

My prayer is that God will use these lessons to launch Christians into a life-long exploration and appropriation of the power and blessings of the Gospel. As a result, they will become disciples who consistently experience victory over self, sin, the world and the devil through the Spirit of the crucified, risen and enthroned Savior and Lord. And, enabled by that same Spirit, they will make a redemptive difference in the lives of others and, ultimately, help complete the Great Commission in our generation.

LESSON 1:

WHY STUDY PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS?

1 Why should we study the letter of the apostle Paul to the Romans? To answer this question, let's review some church history. From the time the apostle Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, God used this letter in order to reveal with full clarity the truth that the Gospel is the power of God for the salvation of people.

2 Let's go back to the experience of three great Christians in church history, about how God used the apostle Paul's letter in their lives.

SAINT AUGUSTINE

3 St. Augustine lived in AD 354-430. He is known as one of the greatest church theologians. His mother, Monica, was a very devout and prayerful Christian. But her son, Augustine, was immersed in worldly philosophy and carnal vices. He was living in adultery with a mistress. You may think that the "living-in" lifestyle is a modern practice. It was already popular during the time of Augustine. This proves that people and sin have never changed. It also proves that God's solution to sin has remained the same as well.

4 While Augustine sank deeper and deeper into philosophy and sin, Monica's prayers became even more fervent. And here's how God answered the prayers of a faithful praying mother.

5 One day, while studying in the garden of a friend he was visiting, Augustine overheard from the other side of the wall children playing and saying repeatedly, in the Latin language, "'To-lle, le-ge! To-lle, le-ge!'" – Pick up and read, pick up and read!

6 At that moment Augustine saw a Bible on the table where he was studying, and it was open at the apostle Paul's letter, Romans 13:12-14, which Augustine read: ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.

7 God used those verses from Paul's letter to the Romans to convict Augustine and lead him to Christ. He abandoned pagan philosophy and worldly pleasures, becoming a leading servant of God and teacher of theology in his time. St. Augustine's writings continue to be studied by Christian theologians today.

8 Why should we study Paul's letter to the Romans? From St. Augustine's experience, this letter to the Romans will give us a foundation for the Christian life that will give us victory over sin and worldliness and that will make us fruitful in our service to God.

9 Like St. Augustine, we need to heed the injunction of Romans 13:12-14. We need to study Paul's letter to the Romans in order to understand that the Gospel is the only power of God for salvation from sin.

MARTIN LUTHER

10 The experience of Martin Luther also gives us a great motivation for studying Paul's letter to the Romans. Luther lived in AD 1483-1546. He was a monk who fervently sought assurance of salvation through good works and religious disciplines. He was more zealous than his fellow monks in fasting, self-mortifications and penance in the hope that his sins would be forgiven, and that he would be assured of salvation. He continually examined his conscience in order to discover what other sins he needed to confess. His confessions became so frequent and long that his priest confessor got tired of his confessions.

11 In spite of his efforts, Luther could not find peace in his heart, and he never received assurance of forgiveness for his sins. But he kept studying the Bible. Then one day, one verse from Paul's letter to the Romans caught his attention, Romans 1:17: "The just shall live by faith." Through this verse, God opened the spiritual eyes of Luther. He saw that forgiveness of sins was not obtained through good works but only through faith in the grace of God in Christ.

12 After Luther experienced salvation based on grace through faith alone, God used him to start the protest against the wrong teachings of the Roman church. Initially, Luther had no intentions of separating from the Roman church. His one aim was to bring a reformation or change and purification within the church. The essence of his reformation may be summarized in three statements: Sola Scriptura (By Scripture alone), Sola Gratia (By Grace alone), and Sola Fide (By Faith alone).

13 Why should we study Paul's letter to the Romans? Based on Luther's experience, we need to study Romans in order to understand that salvation is solely by the grace of God through faith.

JOHN WESLEY

14 The experience of John Wesley gives us a third reason for studying Paul's letter to the Romans. John Wesley lived in England in AD 1703-91. He was a priest in the Anglican Church. Like Luther, he also strove to have assurance of salvation; like Luther he thought that salvation could be obtained through good works and through serving God in religion.

15 Because of this he went as a missionary to America, even though he himself was not sure of his own salvation. He returned home to England a failure and without peace in his soul.

16 But back in England, one time he was invited to attend a meeting of a group of Christians called Moravians. He had met some Moravians before, while he was sailing on the way to America. While they were in the middle of their voyage, a tremendous storm hit their ship, such that Wesley feared their ship would break and sink into the sea. But in one corner of the ship he saw a group of people peacefully and fervently praying. They were known as the Moravians. Wesley was greatly amazed at their peace in the face of great danger, and he developed a deep desire to know the secret of their peace.

17 Back in England, Wesley was going to attend a meeting of the Moravians. At the meeting the preface to Martin Luther's commentary on Romans was read, in which he described how salvation was obtained through grace by faith. John Wesley later testified, that while he was

listening to the explanation of Luther, “My heart was strangely warmed”. There, at that moment, Wesley received salvation by grace through faith alone.

18 As a result of his experience of salvation, God used John Wesley to start a revival in England, which spread to other parts of the world. At that time, the French Revolution was also happening, in which thousands of people, specially from the nobility, were being killed with their heads being cut off at the guillotine. According to historians, if not for Wesley and the revival he launched, a similar bloody revolution would have also occurred in England.

19 The thousands of people who were brought to Christ through Wesley’s ministry were not welcomed by the Anglican Church. This forced them to form their own church which eventually became called the Methodist Church, which continues to this day.

20 Paul’s letter to the Romans, which Martin Luther explained, was used by God to bring John Wesley to salvation. From Wesley’s experience, we need to study the letter to the Romans in order for us to have assurance of salvation, for our lives to be changed, and for us to bring a spiritual revolution in the lives of many people.

THE CONTENTS OF ROMANS

21 We shall make a spiritual journey through a study of Paul’s letter to the Romans. To use a different metaphor, like architects we shall lay down a foundation for our spiritual house. Or, based on Romans we shall draw a blueprint or plan to guide us in building our spiritual house. We shall have a map for the spiritual journey; we shall have a blueprint for building our spiritual house.

ROMANS 1-5

- Model Disciple
- The Gospel: God’s Power for Salvation
- Sin: Problem of Gentiles
- Sin: Problem of Jews
- The Gospel: Justification
- The Blessings of Justification

ROMANS 6-11

- Deliverance from the Power of Sin
- Deliverance from the Law
- The Holy Spirit-filled Life
- Deliverance from the Effects of Sin
- More than Conquerors
- Assurance of God’s Plan

ROMANS 12-16

- In the Body of Christ
- Under Government
- Among Differences
- To the End of the Earth in Mission
- Into Deep Relationships

BIG CHALLENGE

22 We are sure that these lesson in Romans will prove to be a big challenge. They will require all your ability of thought and prayer and obedience in order to discover its deep truths. But you can be confident that your efforts will be rewarded with greater assurance, victory, and fruitfulness in your life and service as a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

23 Are you ready to begin your spiritual journey in studying the letter of Paul to the Romans?

This week:

MEMORIZE:

Romans 1:16: For I am not ashamed of the gospel ^{of} Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. Romans 1:16

24 This week, try to read the whole letter to the Romans, following the schedule below. Put a check mark in the box each time you complete the assigned daily reading. Write down any thoughts or questions you may have as a result of your reading.

Read:

Day 1 – Roma 1, 2

.....

Day 2 – Roma 3, 4

.....

Day 3 – Roma 5, 6

.....

Day 4 – Roma 7, 8

.....

Day 5 – Roma 9, 10, 11

.....

Day 6 – Roma 12, 13, 14

.....

Day 7 – Roma 15, 16

.....

As our chart outline below shows us, the Gospel is more than just the brief evangelistic presentations we use today.

- The Gospel is more than just an insurance to guarantee that we escape hell and that we go to heaven when we die.
- The Gospel is not about Jesus giving our best life now here in this world.
- The Gospel is not about a Santa Claus Jesus who will give us health, wealth, happiness and prosperity in this life.
- The Gospel is God’s Plan of Salvation, designed from eternity past and culminating in eternity future, about God restoring His perfect creation that was ruined by sin and about preparing a special family whose members share in the perfect character of His Son Jesus Christ, a family with whom He will share His eternal kingdom in the new heaven and new earth.
- The letter of Paul to the Romans shows us the three important aspects of the salvation that God will accomplish in the life of every believer: justification, sanctification, and glorification.
- Let’s study the chart carefully:

CHART: PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

INTRODUCTION: Theme – The Gospel: God's Power for Salvation Romans 1:1-17		
JUSTIFICATION Romans 1:18-5:11	SANCTIFICATION Romans 5:12-8:39; 12:1-15:32	GLORIFICATION Romans 8:18-21, 29-30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem: Sin Romans 1:18-3:20 • Solution: Christ's Redemption Romans 3:21-26 • Justification: By Grace thru Faith Romans 3:21-4:25 • Justification: Blessings Romans 5:1-11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positional Romans 5:12 – 7:25 • Personal Romans 8 (Romans 9, 10, 11 – see below) • Relational Church – Rom 12 Society – Rom 13 Doubtful Matters – Rom 14:1-15:7 • Missional Romans 15:8-32 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redemption of the Body and of all Creation Romans 8:18-21 • God's Whole Plan Romans 8:29-30 Foreknew Predestined Called Justified Glorified
GOD'S SOVEREIGN GRACE The Chosen People and History – Romans 9, 10, 11		
CONCLUSION: Farewell Greetings – Romans 16		

LESSON 2:

MODEL DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

- 1 In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a model disciple of Christ?
- 2 In this lesson we shall study about the apostle Paul as a model disciple of Christ, who would serve as an inspiration and challenge to us today. In his introductory words (Romans 1:1-17), Paul exhibited four qualities as a model disciple of Christ.

DEVOTION TO CHRIST

- 3 This is the first characteristic of Paul as a model disciple: HIS FULL DEVOTION AND COMMITMENT TO CHRIST.
- 4 From Romans 1:1, let's notice the words he used to describe himself in relation to Christ. Paul, a bondservant (slave) of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.
- 5 Let's meditate on the three words: SLAVE, CALLED, SEPARATED.

SLAVE OF JESUS CHRIST

6 How would you feel if you were introduced as: “This is Juan de la Cruz; a slave of Mr. So and So”? Would you be willing to introduce yourself as somebody’s slave? I don’t think so.

7 Paul, as a model disciple, was very proud to introduce himself as a SLAVE OF JESUS CHRIST. The NKJV translates the word as “bondservant”; the original word literally means “slave”, the lowest kind of servant in Paul’s time. A slave had no rights; a slave was considered a property of his master, just like anything that he owed, for example, his clothes or shoes or horse or anything at all.

8 The master could do anything he wanted to do with his slave. If he wanted his slave to work all day without resting, the slave could not complain; if he decided not to give food or water to his slave, the slave could do nothing about it; if he wanted to sell, or even kill his slave, no one could prevent the master from doing whatever to his slave. We repeat: A SLAVE HAD ABSOLUTELY NO RIGHTS EXCEPT WHATEVER THE MASTER WISHED TO DO WITH HIM.

9 That was what Paul called himself: A SLAVE OF JESUS CHRIST, someone completely owned by Christ. And that was the first characteristic of Paul as a model disciple. And that’s the characteristic that we should also have today as disciples of Christ.

10 But what a difference we see among Christians today. They are not slaves of Christ. Rather, it appears that Christ is their slave. For them, Christ is like a servant whom they expect to do whatever they ask in prayer. “Lord, do this for me.” “Lord, give me this or give me that.” “Lord, I can’t obey your command to forgive my enemy.” Very strange, indeed, that they even call Christ “Lord”!

11 Why do we even call Christ Lord, if we do not obey his commands? In truth, this is what Christ said in Luke 6:46: “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”

12 If we want to become true disciples of Christ, we must offer ourselves to be SLAVES OF CHRIST, just as Paul had done.

13 But if someone complains, “In that case, then it’s very hard to be a Christian, because we are slaves of Christ.”

14 O brothers and sisters, how shallow is your understanding of what kind of Lord Christ is. Christ your Lord is no other than the one who loved you so much that He gave Himself to die on the cross as a redemptive sacrifice on your behalf to save you from sin.

15 Before we became the slaves of Christ, He Himself was the one who first gave Himself to become a slave in order to save us!

16 Let’s read Philippians 2:5-8:

⁵Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it ^[b]robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but ^[c]made Himself of no reputation, taking the

form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

17 In the words of one hymn: “Amazing love, how can it be, that thou my God shouldst die for me!”

18 It is not hard to be a slave of Christ! To the contrary, it is a great privilege. Like Paul, I should consider it a great honor to be a slave of Christ as a way of showing my gratitude for His suffering on the cross on my behalf for my salvation.

CALLED TO BE AN APOSTLE

19 As a model disciple of Christ, Paul introduced himself as one who has been CALLED.

20 Do you know how we can prove that salvation is by grace alone? This is proven by GOD’S CALL to us. Before we received salvation, we had first to hear God’s call. If God did not call, we would never have received salvation.

21 But how did this call come? God called us through the Gospel. One day, God sent one of His servants who shared with us the Gospel of Christ.

22 This was proven by the apostle Paul in his own experience. We know his story. In the beginning, his name was Saul, a violent enemy of Christians. He persecuted Christians up to foreign cities. That’s how intense his hatred was for Christians when he was travelling toward the city of Damascus, in order to arrest Christians who had fled over there. But in the middle of his journey to Damascus, the Lord Jesus appeared to him and called him, “Saul, Saul!” Afterwards the Lord sent one of his servants named Ananias, who explained to Saul how to put his faith in Jesus and to become a follower of Christ. Saul (later named Paul) was called unto SALVATION, and at the same time, the Lord called him unto SERVICE as an apostle.

APOSTLE

23 Apostle means one who is sent. Paul was called by Christ and sent in order to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles. The word apostle has a NARROW as well as a BROAD meaning.

24 The narrow meaning of apostle refers to the twelve apostles of the Lord Jesus, and to others who received a special calling from God like the apostle Paul.

25 The broad meaning of apostle applies to all Christians. All Christians are sent forth by Christ in order to proclaim to the world the Gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus.

26 Acts 1:8 is a command for all Christians: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be ^[c]witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

27 Paul was a model disciple of Christ because he always kept in mind that he was CALLED TO BE AN APOSTLE, someone sent by Christ on a mission to proclaim the Gospel everywhere.

28 Do you wish to be a true disciple of Christ? Follow the example of Paul. Always keep in mind and always fulfill your assignment as someone called at sent by Christ to tell others about the Gospel of Christ.

SET APART FOR THE GOSPEL OF GOD

29 The apostle Paul also described himself as someone SET APART BY GOD for Himself.

30 The meaning of “set apart” is simple but profound and important. Let’s use an illustration. For example, in the kitchen there are ten plates. You set aside one plate for exclusive use by the father of the family. Yes, the plate has exactly the same design as the other plates. But you set aside this one particular plate for use by the father of the family. And because you have set it aside as such, this plate may not be used by anyone else.

31 As a disciple of Christ, that’s how Paul described himself – he was set apart for God and for God’s work of the Gospel alone. Because he was set apart for God, he would not allow himself anymore to be used for sin, not to be used by the enemy, not to be used any longer for any purpose or work that was contrary to God’s will.

32 In 2 Timothy 2:20, 21 Paul explains the importance of the Christian setting himself apart for God:

²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. ²¹ Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

33 In other words, according to Paul, in a royal house, there are exclusive vessels, plates and silverware that were brought out only for special occasions. But there were also ordinary vessels that were used for daily use, as well as for more humble use such as the bedpan.

34 Which kind of vessel and for what kind of use do you want your life to be? Do you wish to be a vessel for honorable use for special occasions? Or are you happy to be a bedpan?

35 If you wish to be a special instrument whom God will use for honorable work in His kingdom, you must cleanse yourself from all sin and you must separate yourself from every thing or relationship that will hinder you from serving the Lord.

36 Paul was a model disciple of Christ because he was exclusively SET APART FOR GOD. How about you? Are you ready to dedicate yourself exclusively for God alone? Are you ready to forsake all sin? Are you ready to terminate any relationship that will prove to be a stumblingblock in following Christ?

LOVE FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS

37 We saw that Paul was a model disciple, first, because, of his FULL DEVOTION AND COMMITMENT TO CHRIST. This devotion was characterized by three qualities: he considered himself as a SLAVE of Christ, as CALLED to be an apostle, and as SET APART for God.

38 The next quality of Paul as a model disciple was this: he had a deep LOVE FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS. Let's read Romans 1:8-11. How did Paul demonstrate his love for other Christians?

(a) PRAYER.

Paul proved his love for other Christians by praying for them. In verse 9 Paul said that he remembered the Roman believers in his prayers regularly.

This is a big challenge for us: Do we regularly pray for our brothers and sisters in the Lord?

(b) MUTUAL ENCOURAGEMENT.

Paul showed his love for other Christians through his desire to give them encouragement. In verse 11 Paul told the Roman brethren that he was eager to visit them in order to bring them encouragement. As an apostle he had a lot of truths taught by the Holy Spirit, which he wanted to impart to the Romans.

But in verse 12 he seemed to take back what he said in verse 11: "that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." Do you see the humility of Paul? Just because he was an apostle that he could have thought the Roman believers had nothing to share with him that would encourage him in his faith. No, Paul did not think that at all. He assured the Roman brethren that both he and they could encourage one another. Not only could he encourage them; he was sure they could encourage him as well!

How about us? In our relationship with other Christians, do we feel we need their encouragement as much as they need ours?

ZEAL IN THE LORD'S WORK

39 A third quality of Paul as a disciple of Christ was his ZEAL FOR THE LORD'S WORK.

40 Let's read Romans 1:13, 14: ¹³Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles. ¹⁴I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. ¹⁵So, as much as is in me, *I am* ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.

41 Let's examine ourselves: To what extent does our zeal for the Lord's work reach? Are we seeking to reach all our family members and relatives? All our friends? All our neighbors?

42 A true disciple of Christ possesses a deep passion to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

FULL CONFIDENCE IN THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

43 A fourth quality of Paul as a disciple of Christ is his full confidence in the power of the Gospel. Let's read Romans 1:16, 17.

44 The apostle Paul had complete confidence in the Gospel. For him, the Gospel alone was the power of God for the salvation of people. Only the Gospel provided the way for people to be saved. The reason he wrote to the Roman Christians was to explain to them what the Gospel was and why only the Gospel was God's power to bring salvation to people.

45 This is the reason why we are studying the letter of Paul to the Romans: in order for us to understand fully and to grasp firmly the whole meaning and power of the Gospel. We need to experience the power of the Gospel first in our own lives, and as a result we are able to share the Gospel to people around us.

CONCLUDING CHALLENGE

46 These are the qualities of Paul as a model disciple of Christ:

- FULL COMMITMENT OF HIMSELF AND FULL DEVOTION TO CHRIST.
- LOVE FOR OTHER CHRISTIANS.
- ZEAL FOR THE LORD'S WORK.
- FULL CONFIDENCE IN THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

47 Are these qualities being developed in our lives? Let's ask the Lord that, through the power of the Holy Spirit and through our study of Paul's letter to the Romans, these qualities of a true disciple of Christ may be developed more and more in our lives from now on.

48 Important reminder: These qualities of a true disciple of Christ are fruits of God's grace at work in our lives through the Gospel. These are not a list of qualities written on a wall in front of us, which say that we must strive to make these qualities ours. In other words, a teacher is not telling us that there are qualities you must attain. Now, exert all the strength that you have in order to obtain them.

49 Brothers and sisters, these qualities are gifts of God's grace through the Gospel. If we have truly received Christ as Savior and Lord, if we have been truly born again, these are qualities that the Holy Spirit will nurture and mold into our lives, as a result of the power of the Gospel that's at work in our entire being. In other words, as our relationship with Christ grows stronger and deeper, these qualities will surely manifest themselves more and more in our lives.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

50 MEMORIZE:

Romans 1:7: To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 1:7

51 Like the Christians in Rome, you are “BELOVED OF GOD”! Everyday this week, meditate on this truth, claim this truth for yourself. Put a check mark for each day that you pray this prayer:

“Father God in heaven, thank You that You love me.”

Throughout the day, try to repeat this prayer in your heart, even at work. And at the end of the day, write the blessings you experienced as a result of meditating on the love of God for you.

- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday
- Sunday

LESSON 3:

**THE GOSPEL:
GOD’S POWER FOR SALVATION**

1 Gospel. We often say this word. But what does the Gospel mean? In this lesson, we shall answer a few questions about the Gospel.

SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL

2 The simple meaning of “gospel” is GOOD NEWS. Of course, we will ask, “What good news?” We will answer this question below. First, we will first answer the question, “From where or from whom did this good news come?”

3 According to Romans 1:1, 2, the Gospel came from God. God Himself revealed this good news to people. How did He communicate this good news? In the history of humanity, people used varied ways of communicating news. In ancient times, news was brought by word of mouth by a messenger. News was also sent through letters. Then radio and telegram were invented. Now in our electronic age, communication has become very fast through cell phones, digital messages, social media, etc. Newspapers and magazines still exist, but most people now receive their news from television and the internet.

4 What method did God use to communicate His good news? According to Romans 1:2, God entrusted the Gospel to prophets, and the prophets in turn proclaimed this to the people through their spoken word. Afterward, the words of the prophets were written, and these words are now contained in the holy scriptures or the Bible.

5 We may say that the Bible contains the Gospel or good news. We may also say that the whole Bible is the Good News from God for people. In fact, there is a translation that’s called Good News Bible. We also hear it said in English, “The Bible is God’s love letter to you”. That statement is also true. Every time we open the Bible, we should think, “God is speaking to me.”

6 The Scripture referred to by Paul in Romans 1:2 is the Old Testament. From the start, God is the source of the Gospel. His messages were given by Him to the prophets in the Old Testament and found their full expression in the New Testament. Let’s read the following verses to understand the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

(a) Luke 24:27, 44-47

²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

⁴⁴ Then He said to them, “These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.” ⁴⁵ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

⁴⁶ Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the 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 to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

(b) 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

7 From the verses above, please notice the words “in all the Scriptures”. “the things concerning Himself”, “Thus it is written”, “according to the Scriptures”. The Gospel or good news about Christ was written by the prophets in the Old Testament even before Christ came into the world. That’s why the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:1, 2: “. . . the gospel of God ² which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” The Gospel comes from God.

THE CONTENTS OF THE GOSPEL

8 What does the Gospel contain? The Gospel contains the truths about Jesus Christ. From Romans 1:3, 4 we need to know three truths about Christ.

(a) The Son of David according to His human nature.

This title of Christ refers to His human birth through the family lineage of king David (Romans 1:3). The birth, life and death of Christ happened at a definite time and place in world history, just like that of any other human being – but with a difference.

- Christ was born of a virgin (Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:30-35)
- Christ lived a perfect human life on earth without any sin ((Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21,22)
- Christ death was different from any other human death in that He willingly offered His life as a sacrifice for the salvation of people (John 10:11,17,18; 1 Peter 3:18)

(b) The Son of God according to His divine nature.

As the Son of God (Romans 1:3), Christ already existed before anything was ever created, and long before He was born as a human baby. In His eternal state He was called the WORD (LOGOS in Greek). In fact, the whole universe was created through Him.

John 1:1-3: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

(c) Son of God in power.

This title “Son of God in power” refers to His exalted position after His resurrection when He ascended back to heaven to sit at the right hand of God (1 Peter 3:21, 22). When Christ returned

to heaven after His resurrection, He did not return in His former state as God. Rather, after His resurrection He returned to heaven bearing His dual nature as God-Man. And as the God-Man, God gave Him the full right to be Savior and Lord of all people. Let's read the following verses:

Acts 2:36: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Philippians 2:9-11: " ⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

NATURE, PURPOSE, METHOD AND OBJECT OF THE GOSPEL

9 Let read and meditate n Romans 1:16: ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

10 From the verse above, we see the following:

- NATURE of the Gospel: It is the power of God.
- PURPOSE of the Gospel: It is for salvation.
- METHOD of the Gospel: It is through faith.
- OBJECTS of the Gospel: For everyone who believes.

POWER OF THE GOSPEL

11 Let's read and meditate on Romans 1:17: For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

12 Romans 1:17 explains why the Gospel is the power of God for salvation. This is because in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed. According to commentators, the "righteousness of God" has two meanings:

- (a) First, the righteousness of God refers to His attribute as righteous in His nature and works. He is pure righteousness in His essence; and all His works in regard to His creatures are all done in perfect righteousness.
- (b) Second, the righteousness of God refers to His way of putting people in right relationship with Himself. This is by way of giving to those who believe the gift of righteousness which they receive by faith alone. In the succeeding chapters of Romans the apostle Paul will explain how God's righteousness in justifying and forgiving people through the redemption accomplished by Christ on the cross.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

13 Let's meditate on this truth: "THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION."

14 In the Greek language, the word POWER is DUNAMIS, from which we derive the English word DYNAMITE and DYNAMO. We may use these two pictures in order to understand the meaning of the Gospel as the power of God for salvation.

- (a) Sin has erected a high and thick wall reaching up to heaven which separates us from God. Not only that, sin has also imprisoned us inside a prison made of massive walls. Worst of all, sin has bound us with strong chains of vices and bad habits. How are we to escape such a bondage? We will be delivered through the DYNAMITE OF THE GOSPEL, which will break down the wall that separates us from God; this dynamite will shatter the iron chains of vices and bad habits that enslave us.
- (b) After we have been delivered from the prison and the chains of sin, one big problem remains: How can we have the power to live a life that's pleasing to God? This power will also be given by God through the DYNAMO OF THE GOSPEL. In the physical world, a dynamo produces electricity. Similarly in the spiritual life, the DYNAMO OF THE GOSPEL will give us the power to live before God in righteousness and holiness, fully acceptable to God.

15 During this week, meditate and pray over the following:

- (a) Where in your life do you need the DYNAMITE of the Gospel to deliver you from your bondage to sin?
- (b) Where in your life do you need the DYNAMO of the Gospel to give you power and ability to live in a way pleasing to God?

MEMORIZE;

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

LESSON 4:**SIN: PROBLEM OF GENTILES****Part 1**

INTRODUCTION

1 SALVATION – This is what God accomplishes through the Gospel. First, salvation means deliverance from sin. But what is the meaning of sin? In this lesson, we shall answer this first question.

2 In Romans 1:18-32, the apostle Paul exposes the true condition of sin as found among the Gentiles or in pagan nations. Let's remember that in the Bible, before the coming of Christ, the world was divided into two kinds of people: the Jews (God's chosen people, descended from Abraham); and the Gentiles or nations separate from the Jews. After the coming of Christ, people became divided into three types: Jews, Gentiles, and Christians. Let's read 1 Corinthians 10:32: "Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks (Gentiles) or to the church of God (Christians)." When a Jew or Gentile believes in Christ, that person will be considered a Christian.

3 In Paul's letter to the Romans, he deals first with the sin problem as found among the Gentiles. In order to discover the true nature or condition of sin, we must know its two manifestations. Let's read Romans 1:18:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness
and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

4 From this verse, notice the two words which describe the true nature of sin: ungodliness and unrighteousness.

- The first aspect of sin is against God: UNGODLINESS.
- The second aspect of sin is against people: UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

UNGODLINESS: SIN AGAINST GOD

5 Let's look first at the meaning of the first aspect: ungodliness.

6 UNGODLINESS (Greek, ASEBEIA) is sin against God; it means without proper worship and respect toward God. This is the root of all sin. Very often, don't we hear people say about a really bad person, "He has no fear of God"? That's indeed the truth. Because a person has no fear of God that he commits sins against other people.

7 From Romans 1:19-23 let's discover the ways that people commit this sin of ungodliness against God.

8 According to Romans 1:19, 20, if we look carefully at all the wonderful creation around us, specially the beautiful sights and sounds, how do we feel? Isn't it that we are moved to look up and say, "Truly, God is so great to create all of these things"? Who of you have not visited a place of such natural beauty that you could not keep yourself from praising and thanking God?

9 According to Romans 1:19, 20, what we see in all of nature is God's eternal power and deity.

10 And yet, according to Romans 1:21, what do sinners do instead?

- (a) Sinners do not worship God and they do not give Him the honor that His name deserves. This is the reason, for example, why more people are in movie houses or shopping centers at places of pleasure instead of at church on Sundays.
- (b) Sinners do not give thanks to God for the life and the blessings that He continues to give them. One rich business man boasted to a friend, pointing to his vast property, "All of that property I owe to my own smarts and efforts not to anybody else." But we ask, who do you think gives him the life, health and ability that he uses to run his business?

Another wealthy ranch owner boasted to his church minister, "Pastor," he said, extending his hands in a wide circle toward his vast property, "all of that land as far as the eye could see, is all mine." The pastor replied a little above a whisper, while pointing toward heaven, "But, my dear friend, how much treasure do you have laid up there?"

11 The refusal to give glory to God and to give Him thanks has a destructive effect on the heart and mind of people. What is that effect? According to Romans 1:21, 22, when people do not honor God and give Him thanks, they become foolish in their thinking. How is their foolishness manifested? Let's read Romans 1:23, 25:

²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. . . . ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

12 The foolishness of sin is fully manifested in the worship of idols. What is idolatry? This is the making and worshiping of graven images in the form of humans or animals or creeping creatures.

WORSHIPING IDOLS

13 God's prohibitions against idolatry are strict and clear. Let's read Exodus 20:3-5; let's note the things that God prohibits:

³ "You shall have no other gods before Me.

⁴“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; ⁵you shall not bow down to them nor ^[b]serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting^[c] the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me.

14 God prohibits four things:

- (a) Have no other gods;
- (b) Don't make any graven images;
- (c) Don't bow down to the images;
- (d) Don't serve the images.

15 Some, who claim to be Christians, have graven images in their homes or churches. Their excuse, “We don't worship the images. The images merely remind us of God.” Are they committing sin or not?

16 Let's examine carefully whether they are violating God's commands.

- (a) God said, DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER GOD (IDOL, GRAVEN IMAGES). Question: Do they have an idol in their church or house? Yes. Therefore, they violate the first prohibition of God.
- (b) God said, DON'T MAKE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE. Question: Did they make a graven image? Yes. Therefore, they violated the second prohibition of God.
- (c) God said, DON'T BOWN DOWN TO THE GRAVEN IMAGE. Question: Do they pray before the graven image, and do they bow their head or bend their knee before the idol? Yes. Therefore, they violate the third prohibition of God.
- (d) God said, DON'T SERVE THE GRAVEN IMAGE. Question: Do they serve the graven image by dressing it up and carrying it around in processions? Yes. Therefore they violate the fourth prohibition of God.

17 It is very clear that people violate THE FOUR PROHIBITIONS God gave regarding idols or graven images.

OTHER IDOLS

18 Perhaps you are saying, “As for me, I don't have any idols or graven images. I don't worship idols.” But did you know that idols include more than graven images. The true meaning of

idolatry is any PERSON or THING or ACTIVITY that you consider more important than God; anything which serves as a rival or competition for your love and service more than God is considered an idol. For example, in the verses below, find out what things that serve as God's rivals.

- (a) Luke 14:26, 27. Our family members and loved ones can become rivals of God.
- (b) 2 Timothy 3:4. Worldly pleasures can become more important than God.
- (c) Philippians 3:19. For some people, their stomach (appetites) serve as their god.
- (d) Ephesians 5:5. Greed is one form of idolatry.

CHALLENGE

19 In this lesson, we discovered that the first meaning of sin is UNGODLINESS (Greek, ASEBEIA).

20 Let's always keep this in mind. Before we commit sin against people, we first commit sin against God. The reason we do bad things to people is because we lose our fear of God.

21 This was what king David found out. Remember that David was described as "a man after God's own heart" (Acts 13:22). But in one critical moment, he forgot himself and committed a grievous sin. He committed adultery with someone else's wife; and when the woman got pregnant, he had the husband killed in order to cover up his sin. We say, he forgot himself. Actually, whom did he forget? He forgot God; he forgot to look up. But when he repented, what did he say? "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight" (Psalm 51:4).

22 Sin is always against God, and against Him alone. This is the core meaning of sin: Forgetting God; losing the fear of God; not giving God the glory and service He deserves; failing to give God our thanks.

23 Perhaps, you have heard the story about a chicken thief. One night he went to steal his neighbor's chicken. Before he grabbed the chicken, he looked in front of him and saw no one; he look behind him, nobody was there either. He looked to his right, he looked to his left, he saw nobody there. Finally, satisfied that nobody was looking, he stretched out his hands to grab the chicken. But suddenly he heard a loud voice saying, "You forgot to look up!"

24 Yes, the reason we commit sins against other people is because we forget to look up, to God who is looking down on us from heaven!

25 This is the challenge for us at this time. From now on, let's always remember to look up.

26 And I have a very simple suggestion that we can all do everyday. Probably, some of us are already doing this. But I strongly suggest that all of us develop this habit.

27 This is the habit we call DDT – Daily Devotional Time. A daily time of fellowship with God. A time when we read the Bible and pray everyday. We may summarize this habit in the acronym A-C-T-S-S:

- First, ADORATION. Begin by giving worship and praise to God for who He is, His character and attributes.
- Second, CONFESSION. Next, confess any sin and failings you are aware of, and ask God’s forgiveness and cleansing.
- Third, THANKSGIVING. Give thanks to God for His blessings and for answers to prayers.
- Fourth, SUPPLICATION. Present to you’re your requests and petitions regarding your needs and problems as well as for those of others (your family and friends).
- Fifth, SCRIPTURE MEMORY. Choose at least one verse to memorize during the week.

THE MOST IMPORTANT DECISION

28 But at this time, this is the most important decision we can make:

FROM NOW ON, WILL YOU COMMIT YOURSELF ALWAYS TO PUT GOD FIRST IN YOUR MIND, WORDS AND ACTIONS?

MEMORIZE:

Romans 1:16: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Romans 1:16

LESSON 5

SIN: PROBLEM OF THE GENTILES

Part 2

SIN is the problem of all people, whether Jew or Gentile. Only the Gospel of Christ will bring salvation. But before we can fully understand what salvation is, we must understand what sin is, and what are the problems that sin brings.

In our previous lesson we learned that sin has two meanings, two aspects. The first aspect is that sin is against God; this is called UNGODLINESS. The second aspect is against people, and this is called UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

UNGODLINESS (ASEBEIA in Greek) is sin against God. In Greek, ASEBEIA means not giving proper worship and honor to God. This is the root of all sin. We often hear the saying, “That man has no fear of God”. That’s the truth; because a person has no fear of God, nothing restrains him from doing wrong against other people.

UNRIGHTEOUSNESS: SIN AGAINST PEOPLE

We discussed UNGODLINESS in the previous lesson. In this lesson we will discuss UNRIGHTEOUSNESS (ADIKIA in Greek). Unrighteousness is sin against people, whether against oneself or against others. Unrighteousness is doing what is NOT right or proper. It is transgression against the law and standard of God.

In Romans 1:24-32 the apostle Paul exposes the different ways that people do unrighteousness.

Let’s read Romans 1:24: Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves.

(1) Unrighteousness is MISUSING OUR BODIES (our persons, who we are). Read Romans 1:24.

Let’s first look at the opposite of unrighteousness. According to the verses below, mention some ways to treat the body properly.

- Ephesians 5:29 _____
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 _____

Mention some ways that people destroy and dishonor their bodies. Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-16.

(2) Unrighteousness is MISUSING SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS. What wrong relationship is mentioned in Romans 1:26, 27? It is inappropriate to talk about the things people do in their

perverted sexual relationship between male and male and between female and female. But these perversions are a result of people rejecting God and disobeying His commands. These perversions result in worse moral condition as shown below.

(3) Unrighteousness is MISUSING THE MIND. According to Romans 1:28:

a. Whom did people refuse to retain in their mind?

b. Since people refused to retain God in their mind, to what kind of mind did God give people over?

Today, how do people reject God from their minds? In the schools, the theory of evolution is taught; according to this theory, there is no Creator God. Everything just happened to exist by chance. Is that possible? Can something come from nothing? But that theory is taught by professors in schools and universities today.

Another example is the prohibition of Bible reading and prayer in schools. The Ten Commandments are not allowed to be posted in government offices, not even in the halls of justice.

THREE DOWNWARD STEPS

UNRIGHTEOUSNESS has three downward steps.

STEP 1: WRONG USE OF THE BODY.

STEP 2: WRONG USE OF MALE & FEMALE RELATIONSHIP.

STEP 3: WRONG USE OF THE MIND.

The final and lowest downward step is the wrong use of the mind which results in a REPROBATE MIND. We may translate Romans 1:28 as follows, “Since people considered knowledge of God as trash, God gave them up to a MIND OF TRASH, in order to do only trashy things.”

The mind that rejects God as trash, God also rejects as trash, REPROBATE, rejected as not measuring up to the test. Once a person sinks to this lowest level of sin, God will abandon him “to do those things which are not fitting” – such as the things listed in Romans 1:29-32.

Let’s examine the list carefully. Underline the sins or sinners on the list that you know or have read about who fit that description.

- All unrighteousness,
- Sexual immorality,
- Wickedness,
- Covetousness,
- Maliciousness;
- Envy,
- Murder,
- Strife,
- Deceit,
- Evil-mindedness;
- Whisperers,
- Backbiters,
- Haters of God,
- Violent,
- Proud,
- Boasters,
- Inventors of evil things,
- Disobedient to parents,
- Undiscerning,
- Untrustworthy,
- Unloving,
- Unforgiving,
- Unmerciful;

THE DEPTHS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

In Romans 1:32 we see the lowest depths of the unrighteousness of sinners:

a. What do people know about the punishment of God on sinners?

b. In spite of the fact that people know that sin will be punished with death, what do people still do?

c. Not only do they continue to commit sin themselves, what do they do and how do they feel about other sinners?

GOD'S WRATH

Let's read Romans 1:18 again:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

In your opinion, does God have the right to show His wrath against people's ungodliness and unrighteousness? According to the apostle Paul, yes. God has the right to show His wrath against people's ungodliness and unrighteousness. Not only because they commit sin but also because by their sin they suppress the truth. In other words, the truth of God is prevented from becoming known because people's sins suppress and hinder the truth.

Someday, at the last judgment, God's full wrath will be revealed. However, at the present time, God's wrath is being revealed through God's action of "giving over" or allowing people to continue committing even worse and worse sins.

Let's carefully study Romans 1:24, 25, 26. Let's imagine a series of three fences. These three fences represent the laws of God, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the ministry of God's servants. If people keep pushing against the fences by their continual breaking of God's laws and by their continual rejection of the call to repentance by the Holy Spirit and by God's servants, what will God do? A day will come when God will remove the fences altogether, and people will rush headlong unhindered into deeper and worse sins until they reach the inevitable end of judgment and damnation. For example, what do the verses below say about unchecked sin?

- Genesis 6:3
- Proverbs 34,35
- 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12
- Matthew 12:31,32

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit means persistent rejection of the call and conviction of the Holy Spirit, such that a time will come when the Holy Spirit will stop calling and convicting a sinner. The moment the Holy Spirit stops convicting a sinner, from that moment on the sinner will have no chance or desire to repent, and thus he will inevitably end up in judgment and damnation.

CHALLENGE

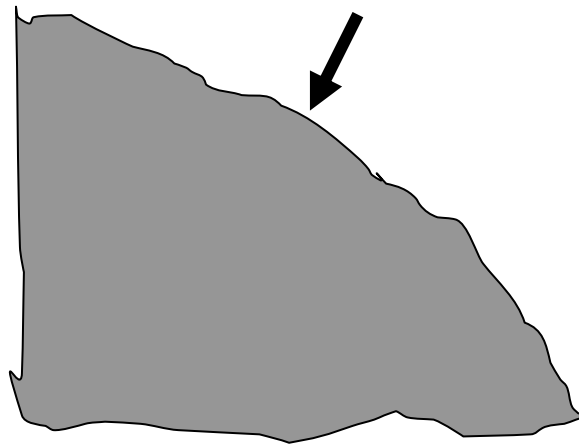
The sins listed in Romans 1:18-32 are truly deserving of God's wrath. But it is for this reason that Christ came into the world, to save us from the penalty and power of sin. God is calling to us today. Who of you is not sure of your relationship with God? Who of you does not have assurance that God has forgiven your sins? Who of you is not sure if you have eternal life? Don't hesitate, don't delay, don't put off making sure that you are in right relationship with God. Hear the call and warning from God's Word in the following verses:

- 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2
- Hebrews 3:12-15

Repent and return to God... today, this very moment!

We will close our lesson with this illustration.

Who of you have gone mountain climbing? They say, when you go mountain climbing, you must be aware that there is a "point of no return", when you are descending on a downward slope. For example, look at our figure below; notice where the arrow is pointing. That's the point of no return. You must make sure that you do not go beyond that point, where the downward pull of gravity will be stronger than your ability to climb back upward. Once you pass that point of no return, you will surely plunge down to your death.



This is what the Bible warns about. Sin has a POINT OF NO RETURN. If you persist in your sin, and you keep ignoring and rejecting the call of the Holy Spirit, be careful that you do not pass the "point of no return" when the Holy Spirit goes silent permanently and stops convicting you.

You never know when you have reached that point of no return. Therefore, today, I am making this appeal to you. Today, repent and return to God. Today is the day of salvation. Believe in the Lord Jesus as your Savior and Lord at this moment, right now.

MEMORIZE

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

LESSON 6:**SIN: PROBLEM OF THE JEWS**

1 Do you know people who have a high opinion of themselves? When they hear of individuals caught in some crime or scandal, their immediate reaction is to say, “Good thing, I’m not like that.

2 Such people have what is called the “holier than thou” attitude. Usually, these are educated and religious people. Not only do they look down on others, they are judgmental as well.

3 But let’s beware. When we point a finger at others, remember that more fingers point back to ourselves.

4 This is the topic of the apostle Paul in Romans 2. While he was describing in Romans 1:18-32 the moral corruption of sinful Gentiles, it seems like in the background, he heard someone proudly saying, “As for myself, I’m not like one of despicable sinners. In fact, I total hate such people.”

5 This is the reason why the apostle Paul begins this chapter with this statement, “*Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things*” (Romans 2:1).

6 Religious people have this judgmental attitude, coupled with the feeling that they are better morally than others. Religious people are found among all races and nations in the world, but probably the most notorious examples are found among the Jews.

7 In Romans 2 Jews are targeted by the apostle Paul as representative of all religious people. In order to drive Jews into a corner, and in order to show them that being religious is not sufficient covering for their sin, the apostle Paul explains the four bases of God’s judgment. And using these four bases Paul proves that religious people are as sinful as pagan Gentiles.

BASIS 1: ACCORDING TO TRUTH

8 What is the first base of God's judgment? God's judgment is ACCORDING TO TRUTH.

Romans 2:2:

But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.

9 According to truth, not according to outward appearances. We know what kind of person a religious individual is from outward manifestations. But before God's judgment, all outward forms and appearances will be stripped away like a garment and the real person will be revealed fully naked.

10 In the Old Testament the Lord declared, "*I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings*" (Jeremiah 17:10).

11 Christ says the same thing in the New Testament, "*... all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts*" (Revelation 2:23).

12 No one can escape the judgment of God. Religious people think that because they know so much about religion and about God's laws, and because they know how to judge others, that they will escape God's judgment. However, what does the apostle Paul say? "*And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?*" (Romans 2:3).

13 Not only are Jews in danger of this. We ourselves are in danger as well, who know a lot about the Bible, that such knowledge is sufficient to make us acceptable before God. The apostle Paul makes clear that obedience, not mere knowledge, is what God accepts.

14 In fact, the more knowledge, the greater the punishment. This is what the Lord said in Luke 12:47, 48: "*47 And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*"

15 In addition to knowledge-without-obedience, there is another danger we must avoid: taking for granted God's goodness to us. Let's read Romans 2:4, 5: "*4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you*

are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

16 Often we comment, “We think of God only when we are in trouble.” That’s true for many people. But according to Romans 2:4, 5, we must think of God even when we’re not in trouble, during the times when we’re enjoying blessings, when our life seems all peaceful and happy. We must specially get close to God when life seems going well and successful. This is because God’s goodness is meant to lead us to repentance and to more godly life.

17 In Tagalog there is a saying, “Kung ayaw ka sa santong dasalan, kukunin ka sa santong paspasan.” (Loosely translated, “If I can’t get you by hook, I’ll get you by crook”.) God’s goodness is His way of drawing us tenderly. But if we persist in ignoring His tender wooing, a time will come when we’ll receive His judgment instead. Romans 2:5 warns us, *“But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”*

BASIS 2: ACCORDING TO WORKS

18 We find the second basis of God’s judgment in Romans 2:6: *He “will render to each one according to his deeds”*

19 Let’s read from our Bible Romans 2:7-10. The verses below from Revelation will show how people will be judged according to their works.

20 At the Last Judgment, God will open the books. Let’s read Revelation 20:11, 12: *“¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”*

21 In our day, many criminals escape justice. That’s because there are no witnesses to their crimes. For this reason, with the help of modern technology, the government is installing lots of security cameras in sensitive places, such as airports, etc. Many criminals have been caught with the help of these cameras.

22 But no one can ever hide from the eyes of God who sees everywhere. This is truly scary! God sees and records in His book all that we do, including what we think in our deepest mind and heart. And on the day of judgment, the book will be opened and none of us can deny what we have done or thought, because they are all recorded in the book of God. Some Bible

commentators say that it will be like the video of our whole life will be replayed. This is fearful and shameful to think that all of our sins done in secret will be revealed and viewed by the whole universe!

23 But praise God! He Himself provided the way by which we may be forgiven of all our sins and for all our records to be erased from His book. If you put your faith in Christ and receive Him as your Savior and Lord, He promises to forgive all your sins and to cleanse you from all your unrighteousness, and He assures you that He will remember your sins no more!

BASIS 3: WITHOUT FAVORITISM

24 We read about the third basis of God's judgment in Romans 2:11: "*For there is no partiality with God.*"

25 Usually, Justice is pictured as a blindfolded lady holding a scale in her hand. This means that justice is a respecter of no one, impartial to everyone, rich or poor, famous or ordinary.

26 Sad to say, very often in our country, justice has no blindfolds, instead she has wide open eyes and often sides with the rich and famous, one hand holding the scale but the other hand is wide open waiting to receive bribes.

27 But before God, all people are equal. And God doesn't need to have blindfolds, because His eyes penetrates into the deepest corners of the heart, and He sees the true motives or intentions behind each act. There is no favoritism with God.

28 However, some object to God's partiality with this question: "What will be God's judgment on people who were ignorant of God's laws or people who did not hear about Christ?"

(a) THOSE WHO KNOW GOD'S LAWS

Let's first talk about God's judgment on those who know God's laws. Among these are the Jews who were given God's Word, His laws, such as the Ten Commandments. People who know God's laws will be judged according to the laws that they know.

Romans 2:12, 13:

¹² For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law ¹³ (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.

At the Last Judgment, God will ask the Jews and all persons who have know God's Word: "Did you obey all the good that God commanded you to do? Did you avoid all the bad things God prohibited you from doing?"

And what will be the answer of Jews and all the people who knew God's Word? They will all answer: WE DID NOT DO ALL THE GOOD THAT GOD COMMANDED, AND WE DID NOT AVOID ALL THE BAD THAT GOD PROHIBITED.

Why will that be their answer? Because no one is perfect, not even among the Jews or among people who know God's Word.

(b) THOSE WHO DID NOT KNOW

The Gentiles or pagan nations who did not know God's Word from the Bible will be judged based on the law of God written in their hearts.

Romans 2:14, 15:

¹⁴for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them).

For example, on Judgment Day, how will God judge a mountain tribesman from the deepest jungle of a mountain in the Philippines? This tribesman was never reached by civilization, never received education, he was totally ignorant of God's laws and of the Bible and of Christ. God will never ask this tribesman whether or not he obeyed the Ten Commandments or whether or not he believed in Christ.

Instead, what will God ask him? God will ask this tribesman this question: "Did you obey all the good things that your conscience told you to do? Did you avoid all the bad things that your conscience told you to avoid?" These are the questions God will ask all persons who are ignorant of God's Word and His laws, and ignorant of Christ.

And what answer will be given by that tribesman and by all people like him who never heard of God's laws or of Christ? They will have an answer similar to those who have known God's laws: I DID NOT DO ALL THE GOOD THAT MY CONSCIENCE TOLD ME TO DO; I DID NOT AVOID ALL THE BAD THAT MY CONSCIENCE TOLD ME TO AVOID.

What is that the answer? Because there is no one perfect even among the Gentiles and the pagans.

God's judgment will be exactly the same for everyone – Jew or Gentile, those who knew God's laws and those who did not know: GUILTY! ALL DESERVE TO BE PUNISHED!

BASIS 4: ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL

29 The last basis of God's judgment is found in Romans 2:16: “ *in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*”

30 God installed Christ as the Judge of all. And on Judgment Day, His verdict will be based on the bases we have studied above, and all the evidences needed will be taken from God's book that will be read.

31 Christ's authority as Judge is shown from the following verses:

John 5:22:

For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.

Acts 17:31:

Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

2 Corinthians 5:10:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Philippians 2:9-11:

⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

CHALLENGE

32 We have studied about the four bases of God's judgment:

- According to truth
- According to works

- Without partiality
- According to the Gospel of Christ

33 But the core truth which we must remember is this: WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST.

34 Many people today keep avoiding Christ. Their excuse (as we have pointed out above) is this: “How about those who haven’t heard about Christ?”

35 The answer to that objection is simple: “Friend, Christ will judge accordingly those people who haven’t heard about Him. What you must consider is this: You are now at this moment hearing about Christ. What is your decision – will you receive Him or reject Him?”

36 We have a saying in Tagalog: “Pagkahaba-haba man ng prusisyon, sa simbahan din ang tuloy” – “No matter how long the procession goes, it will come back to the church in the end”.

37 Yes, you can keep putting off deciding whether to accept Christ or not, yes, you can avoid Him now, but remember: Judgment Day will surely come, and the Christ you kept avoiding will be the Christ you must face in the end.

38 Today, Christ is calling you with the voice of a loving Savior.

39 On Judgment Day, He will pronounce verdict on you as your Judge.

40 Which will you choose, to receive Christ as your Savior now? Or will you face Christ as your Judge on Judgment Day who will cast you into hell?

41 Receive Christ today. Tomorrow may be too late!

MEMORIZE:

*Romans 2:4: Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?
Romans 2:4*

LESSON 7

SIN: DOUBLE PROBLEM, DOUBLE SOLUTION

1 Have you heard the statement: “the total depravity man”? Do you believe in this doctrine? Are people really that bad? Aren’t there good people around? This is the doctrine that the apostle Paul clarifies in the first part of his letter to the Romans.

2 In Romans 1:18-32, Paul proved that Gentiles or pagan nations are total sinners.

3 In Romans 2:1-24, Paul also proved that Jews are equally sinners, in spite of their having God’s Word.

4 In Romans 3:9, this is the concluding statement of the apostle Paul about Jews and Gentiles (Greeks): “What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.”

5 From our Bible, let’s read Romans 3:10-18, and let’s try to feel the full weight of the problem of sin that’s controlling all of humanity.

6 Let’s read again from Romans 3:10: THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE! This verse proves the doctrine of the total depravity of human beings.

7 What is the meaning of the total depravity of people? The explanation is found in another verse:

Romans 3:23:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

8 From this verse we discover the double problem of sin.

- First, all have sinned. All have broken the laws of God. We may illustrate the problem as follows: We have fallen into a deep pit; our problem is how do we get out of the pit?
- Second, all have fallen short of the glory of God. We may illustrate this problem as follows: All of us are trying to reach heaven, but all our ladders are short. Our problem is how do we make or how do we obtain a ladder that will reach heaven?

9 According to Romans 3:23, this is the meaning of total depravity – total sinfulness of people: all have fallen into the pit, and all their ladders are too short to reach heaven.

10 That is the double problem of sin: How do we get out of the pit? And how do we reach heaven? Let’s study carefully this double problem of sin.

FALLEN INTO THE PIT

11 First, all have sinned, all have broken God’s laws. God is JUST. Because He is just, He has decreed that all sin, big or small, must be punished. As a just God, He will not allow any sin to escape without being punished. The punishment of sin is eternal death, or eternal separation from God.

12 Let's read Revelation 21:8:

But the cowardly, ^[e]unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

13 This is the list of all sinners that will be cast into hell. Carefully study the different sins listed. In your opinion, which of the sinners listed do you consider as the worst one? Perhaps you'll say, the murderer is the worst sinner.

14 Now, which of the sinners listed do you consider as not so bad? Probably, you'll say that the liar is the least bad of the sinners.

15 Now, according to Revelation 21:8, where will the murderer be thrown? Into the lake of fire, right?

16 Also, according to Revelation 21:8, where will the liar also be thrown? To the same place, the lake of fire! There is no difference between the destination of the murderer and of the liar – no difference between the very bad sinner and the not so bad sinner – both will go to the same place.

17 Why? Because God is absolutely holy and just. In the eyes of the holy and just God, no sin is heavier or lighter, all sins are equally bad and equally deserving of the same punishment in the same place, the lake of fire.

18 What does all this mean? All of us are in danger of being thrown into the lake of fire. Now, the big question is: Who of us has never told a lie, not even once?

19 But let's look at the sin of murder. I am sure that none of us is guilty of committing murder. But do you know what the Bible says about the sin of murder? Let's read 1 John 3:15:

¹⁵ Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

20 What does the Bible say? Whoever hates his brother is a murderer. To commit the sin of murder, you do not need to use a gun or knife. It is enough that we harbor hate in our heart, and according to the Bible, by holding that hatred in our heart we have become a murderer!

21 Who of us has never felt anger and hatred against someone who has hurt us? Isn't it true that because of our intense anger and hatred, at one time or other we have entertained this thought against someone who hurt us: I wish he'd die! No, you did not shoot him or stab him, but in your heart you cursed him and wished him dead.

BAD NEWS!

22 This is the bad news of the Bible. We are all in a terrible danger. All of us have told a lie. All of us have been so angry (at least, once) against someone. And because of these two sins, lying and murder, we are all in danger of being cast into the lake of fire!

23 But thank God! The Bible has GOOD NEWS for us! This is the Gospel of Christ. Gospel means good news. What is the good news of Christ?

24 Christ came down from heaven, and He came down to the pit into which we have fallen, the pit of sin. Sin is a debt we must pay to God. We have fallen into the pit of sin, and we are buried deep in a debt of sin that we cannot pay. But Christ came down into the pit where we are, and He took our sin, He took responsibility for our debt, and He carried on Himself all our sin and debt and carried all of that to the cross. And on the cross, Christ offered Himself as the redemption sacrifice to pay for all our sins and our debt to God.

25 Christ Himself was sinless and had no sin to pay for. We are the sinners, and we are the ones who should die for our sins on the cross. But Christ took our place; He became our Substitute, and as our Substitute, He died for our sins.

26 Let's read 1 Peter 3:18:

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring ^[1]us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.

27 Christ died for our sins. He did not remain; after three days, He rose again from the dead. Now, He is offering forgiveness of sins to all. If you put your faith in Christ and receive Him in your life, He will forgive all your sins and He will lift you out of the pit of sin.

SHORT LADDER

28 Sin has a second problem. Because of sin, we have fallen short of the glory of God. Even if we get out of the pit, we still have one problem: Our ladder is short, how can we reach heaven?

29 In order to reach heaven, God has one standard. Let's read Matthew 5:48:

Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

30 To reach heaven, God requires that we be perfect as God is perfect. But you will say, "Who me, perfect?" Yes, that is God's standard. Only perfect people are qualified to enter a perfect place like heaven.

31 This is what we mean by having a short ladder. All our goodness is like a ladder that we try to use to get to heaven. Some of us have short ladders (we are not good enough), and some of us have long ladders (we think we have done enough good works). But no matter how good we may think we are, all our goodness and the best things we can ever do will still fall short of God's standard of perfection.

32 God requires all of us to be 100% perfect.

- Perhaps some of us think we are 25% good.
- Some may think they are 50% good.
- Still others may think they are 75% good.
- And perhaps a few believe they are 95% good.

33 But God's standard remains the same: only 100% is acceptable to him. And who of us can say that we are 100% good?

34 This is the BAD NEWS of the Bible regarding our goodness.

Isaiah 64:6:

*But we are all like an unclean thing,
And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.*

35 God is HOLY. And in the eyes of a holy God, all our righteousness and goodness are like filthy rags.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 also says: *For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.*

36 In God's eyes, even the most righteous person is still liable to commit sin.

37 James 2:10 also says: *For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.*

38 According to God's standard, violating one commandment is considered as a violation of the entire law. This then is the bad news: None of us is perfect; therefore, none of us is worthy to enter heaven. How then do we solve the problem of the short ladder?

Fig. 1: Problem of Sin

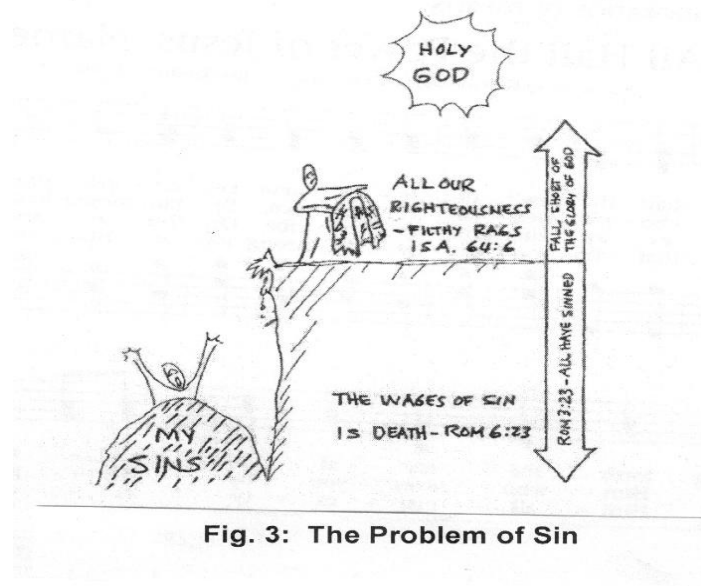


Fig. 3: The Problem of Sin

GOOD NEWS!

39 The Gospel of Christ brings us good news. Christ came down to earth not only to die on the cross; He came down to live a perfect human life. When He was on earth, He did not commit even one sin.

40 This is what Hebrews 4:15 says: *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

41 When He was on earth, Christ was tempted in every way possible; however, no matter what temptations Satan threw at Him He did not yield to any of them; He overcame all temptations, and He did not commit even one sin.

1 Peter 2:22 also says: *“Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth.”* Christ lived a perfect human life on earth. This is good news for us. Why?

42 Christ is now our WAY, our LADDER, to heaven! Christ said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6).

43 Sin has a double problem:

- First, we have sinned and fell into the pit of sin and we became buried in a mountain of debt of sin.
- Second, we fall short of the glory of God. None of us is perfect, and all our goodness is like ladder that does not reach heaven.

44 That is the bad news.

45 Now, the Gospel has a double good news:

46 First, Christ paid for all our sins on the cross; in this way He solved the first problem of sin.

47 Second, Christ lived a perfect human life on earth, and His perfect righteousness is now like a white robe of righteousness that He gives to us as our acceptable garment before God, and in this way He solved the second problem of sin. Christ removed from us our filthy garments, and gave us His perfect righteousness as our holy covering acceptable before God.

Fig. 2: Christ solved the problem of sin.

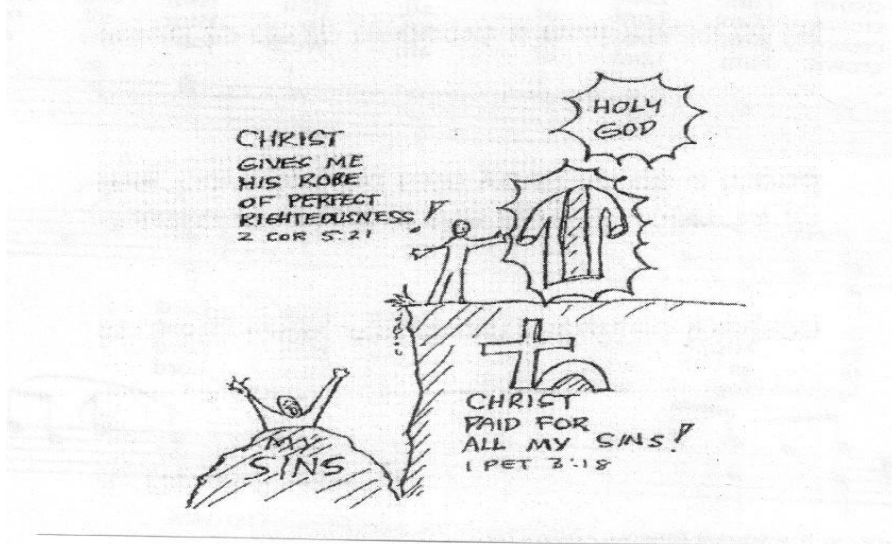


Fig. 4: Christ Solved the Problem of Sin

DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

48 This is the doctrine of JUSTIFICATION. Let's read Romans 3:21-26:

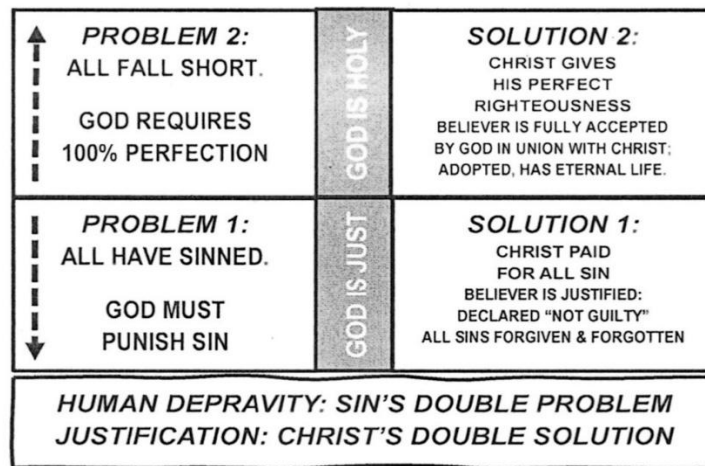
21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all [f] and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified [g] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a [h] propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

49 Let's use the illustration below:

God has two gifts in JUSTIFICATION. These two gifts satisfy the requirements of His two attributes of being JUST (He must punish sin) and of being HOLY (He requires perfect righteousness).

50 First, when you put your faith in Christ, God forgives all your sins because Christ paid for all your sins through His death on the cross. Through justification, God declares you “not guilty”; He forgives and forgets all your sins.

51 Second, when you put your faith in Christ, God accepts you completely (100%) on the basis of the perfect righteousness of Christ. Through justification, God considers you as perfect because of the robe of Christ’s perfect righteousness put around you. Another way to describe this is as follows: When you put your faith in Christ, God places you IN CHRIST (into union with Christ); and because you are now IN CHRIST, you are completely accepted by God in union with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:6,7). You are adopted into the Family of God, and you receive the gift of eternal life, which means you have a permanent relationship with God and you are assured of spending eternity with God in His eternal kingdom.



52 The double gift of justification is given free as a gift of grace when you put your trust in Christ as your Savior and Lord.

53 This is the meaning of salvation by grace through faith. The forgiveness of sin has been purchased by Christ and is given to us free; and our entrance into heaven was obtained for us by Christ through His perfect life.

54 Let’s read Ephesians 2:8, 9: *⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

55 This is the message of Titus 3:5: *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

56 Someone described JUSTIFICATION as God’s mighty saving transaction of the GREAT EXCHANGE whereby God transferred our sin upon Christ and He took Christ’s perfect righteousness as a white robe and clothed us with it. This is the meaning of the profound verse in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

57 In our next lesson, we will give a fuller explanation of JUSTIFICATION.

CHALLENGE

57 Yes, sin has a double problem: (1) all have sinned; (2) all have fallen short of the glory of God.

58 But the Gospel of Christ gives the good news of God's double solution to the problem of sin: Christ died for our sins and He rose again to be our only Way back to God!

59 God has a free gift for you – forgiveness of sins and eternal life with Him forever in heaven.

60 What will you do about it? Christ has already done His part. All you need to do is to believe in Him and receive Him as your Savior and Lord. Christ is knocking at the door of your heart right now. Are you ready to open your heart and receive Christ now?

MEMORIZE:

Romans 3:24: Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 3:24

LESSON 8:

**JUSTIFICATION:
THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM**

1 One morning you wake up and hear this news on the radio: CRIMINAL ON DEATH ROW, SET FOR EXECUTION, PARDONED BY THE PRESIDENT. The announcer paused briefly, then continued: NOT ONLY WAS HE PARDONED, THE PRESIDENT ALSO ADOPTED HIM!

2 What would be your reaction to such a news? Most probably, you'd not believe it. You might think the announcer was playing a joke. In real life, such a thing would never happen, for a president to pardon a criminal about to be executed and also to adopt him.

3 Yes, in ordinary life, such a thing would never happen.

IMPOSSIBLE WITH MEN, POSSIBLE WITH GOD!

4 But in the Gospel of Christ, regarding God's relationship with people, that is exactly what God does with our sins. Because of sin, we are all judged as guilty, condemned and on death row, on the way to hell.

5 But Christ came, took our sins upon Himself, He became our Substitute who went to the cross and receive the penalty of death on our behalf. And as a result of His atoning death for our sins, God now offers us forgiveness for our sins. Not only that, God now gives us the gift of being adopted into His family to become His own children.

6 That is the meaning of JUSTIFICATION.

7 Let's go back and review the meaning of justification, in the words of Roy Robertson, a former missionary to Asia:

8 *"Some explain justified to mean 'just-as-if-I'd' never sinned. This may sound the same, but it is an inadequate explanation. In fact, it misses the main point. God's verdict is far greater than a declaration that we are 'not guilty'. A jury may find a person not guilty of the charge of murder or rape, but that hardly means that he is a righteous man, or one that a father would choose him to marry his daughter. God has gone far beyond the verdict of 'not guilty'; He has declared us to be wholly and absolutely righteous – as righteous as His own Son Jesus Christ."*

9 Let's read again Romans 3:24, 25:

²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God set forth as a ^[h]propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.

10 From these verses, let's note the following truths about JUSTIFICATION:

- Justification is a free GIFT from God;
- Justification is based on the REDEMPTION that Christ accomplished through the offering of His blood on the cross;
- We receive justification by FAITH alone, not because of any good works that we do.

EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM

11 To prove that justification is not obtained through our good works but only through faith, the apostle Paul used Abraham, the father of all believers, as an example.

12 How and when did God justify Abraham? Let's read Romans 4:3:

For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

13 Let's go back and see the life of Abraham (when his name was still Abram); let's read Genesis 15:3-6:

³ *Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one^[c] born in my house is my heir!"*

⁴ *And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." ⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."*

⁶ *And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*

14 From the example of Abraham, the apostle Paul proved that:

- Justification does not depend on WORKS (Romans 4:1-8). ***Abraham was justified (declared as righteous) apart from works.*** Both Abraham and king David were justified based on faith, not on good works. The reward for works is salary or wages (Romans 4:4). Justification is a free gift of grace to the person who believes (Romans 4:4-5).
- Justification is not based on ceremony or ritual of RELIGION (Romans 4:9-12). ***Abraham was justified apart from religious ceremonies or rituals.*** The ceremony or rite of circumcision was given by God in Genesis 17; Abraham received justification in Genesis 15 before the establishing of the ritual of circumcision. Therefore, justification does not depend on ceremony or ritual of religion.

God did this in order for Abraham to serve as father of all believers, whether they are circumcised like the Jews or uncircumcised like the Gentiles (Romans 4:11, 12).

- Justification does not depend on fulfilling the LAW (Romans 4:13-25). ***Abraham was justified apart from the Law.*** The apostle Paul clarified that God gave His promise to Abraham based on faith alone, not on fulfilling the law. Why not? Because God gave the promise to Abraham many, many years before the Law was given to Moses.

WHAT THIS MEANS TO US

15 What does the example of Abraham mean to us today? Why is it important for us to know how he received justification from God?

16 The example of Abraham means a lot to us today. This is because many people today are hoping that they will receive salvation and justification before God by depending on their good works, by their religion, and by fulfilling God's laws.

- *Today God declares us righteous apart from WORKS of morality.*
- *Today God declares us righteous apart from the LAW.*
- *Today God declares us righteous apart from ceremonies or rituals of RELIGION.*
- *Rather, God declares us righteous (JUSTIFIES US) simply when we put our faith in Jesus as our Savior and Lord.*

Romans 4:22-25:

²² And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."

²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, ²⁴ but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵ who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.

18 When God gave His promise to Abraham, Abraham believed God and God counted this as righteousness on the part of Abraham.

19 In the same way today. God gives His Word to us concerning His Son, that He died for our sins and rose again. The moment we believe God's Word regarding His Son and His atoning work, God will count that as righteousness for us. God will justify us, forgive our sins, and adopt us as His own children. Not because of any good works we have done but only on the basis of His grace received through faith.

20 The apostle Paul said the same thing in his letter to the Galatians:

Galatians 2:15, 16:

¹⁵ We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

21 Please notice these words: we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law.

Galatians 3:26:

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

22 Please note carefully these words: *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*

23 Based on the example of Abraham, we now understand more clearly the meaning of Ephesians 2:8, 9:

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

CHALLENGE

24 In conclusion, let me ask you personally. On whom and on what do you depend for your salvation?

- *Are you trusting in your good works of morality in order to be accepted by God?*
- *Are you trusting in ceremonies or rituals of your RELIGION in order to be accepted by God?*
- *Are you trusting in your obedience to the Law in order to be accepted by God?*

25 Remember the example of Abraham. These things did not help him to have a relationship with God. The only basis for his acceptance before God was faith in God alone.

26 Let's also hear the testimony of the apostle Paul. From our Bible, let's read Philippians 3:1-6. From these verses, did you notice the good things Paul mentioned that he could boast before God? And yet in the end, what was the worth of all these good qualities in God's eyes? Listen to his testimony.

Philippians 3:7-9:

⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

27 Listen again to his testimony in verse 9:

And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

28 This is the challenge for you at this time. Are you ready to come to Christ and pray this prayer:

Lord Jesus, I will stop depending on my good works in order to go to heaven. I will stop depending on ceremonies or rituals of religion to get me to heaven. I also stop depending on

my obedience to the Law to qualify me to go to heaven. Rather, I come to You alone, Lord Jesus, and from today I depend on You alone for salvation. I believe that Your death was sufficient payment for all my sins; I depend on your gift of righteousness which you put around me as a pure robe of righteousness that will make me acceptable before God. I receive You as my Savior and Lord, and I depend on You alone for forgiveness of sins and for salvation and eternal life. Amen.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 4:4, 5: ⁴ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. ⁵ But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. Romans 4:4, 5

LESSON 9:**BLESSINGS OF JUSTIFICATION**

- 1 What a tremendous blessing justification is!
- 2 Through justification, we are lifted up from the deep pit of sin. All our sins are forgiven; these have all been thrown into the depths of the sea of God's forgetfulness (Hebrews 8:12).
- 3 Not only that. Through justification, we have been lifted up to a position of full acceptance through the robe of Christ's righteousness which God put around us. Because of the perfect righteousness of Christ around us, we are now completely accepted as perfect in union with Christ.
- 4 All of this happened through the grace of God which we received by faith. Let's read Romans 5:1: *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ....*
- 5 Justification is indeed a great blessing. For what reason? For the reason that justification is also the fountain of many other blessings. Contained in justification are blessings that involve the past, the present, and the future.

BLESSINGS IN THE PAST

- 6 Justification brings blessings of God's love regarding our past.

7 WHILE WE WERE STILL WEAK. Let's read Romans 5:6: *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

8 God's love was manifested at the right time through the death of Christ. When did Christ die for us? Did He die for us when we had strength and ability to serve God? No!

9 Christ died for us when we were still without any strength and without any use to God. In fact, we lived as ungodly people. The word ungodly comes from the Greek ASEBEIA, which refers to someone not worshiping God, someone who is ignoring God, someone who is offending God.

10 When we had nothing to offer to God, when we refused to give God worship, love and service, during that time of being useless to God, Christ died for us.

11 Let's use an illustration.

12 For example, you have no child and you wish to adopt someone. You went to the orphanage and two children were presented to you. One is pretty, smart and well-behaved. The other has a Down Syndrome, ill-mannered and ugly. Which one will you adopt? As for myself, I know which one I will adopt, the pretty, smart and well-behaved child.

13 In God's eyes, we are worse than the child with Down Syndrome. We were without strength, we were ungodly, ugly, unmannerly, utterly useless to God. But when Christ saw us, He loved us and did not hesitate to die in order to save us.

14 Justification gives us assurance of salvation because Christ loved us and died for us in the past when we were still without strength and had nothing to offer to God.

15 WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS. Let's read Romans 5:8: *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

16 In this verse, the amazing love of God through Christ's death is described further. According to this verse, when did Christ die for us?

17 Christ died for us while we were still sinners.

18 Many parents say this to their children, when warning them not to do anything bad: "If you do such and such a bad thing, I won't love you anymore." In other words, the more well-behaved, the more loved; the less well-behaved, the less loved.

19. But as for God, when did He love us? When did Christ die for us? When we were still sinners.

20 The word sinner comes from the Greek word which means someone who disobeys or transgresses God's commands; it also has the meaning of falling short or failing to measure up to God's standard; it means going astray from the right path; it also means dirty and disgusting.

21 That was our condition in the past. We were rebellious against God's commands; we fell short of God's standards; we were dirty and disgusting in God's eyes. And yet while we were in that unlovable condition, Christ died for us!

22 Justification gives us assurance that God loved us when we were totally unworthy of His love!

23 **WHEN WE WERE STILL ENEMIES.** Let's read Romans 5:10: *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

24 We have seen that God loved us when we were still without strength; He loved us when we were still sinners. And now, in this verse, we see that God loved us when we were still His enemies.

25 In ordinary life, it is difficult to love a person who is weak and who has no abilities and who has nothing to give you or who can do nothing for you.

26 It is even more difficult to love a bad person, who looks offensive to you, and whose life and actions deviate from the right and acceptable standards.

27 And most difficult of all is to love a person who acts as our enemy, who plans to do things to harm us. In the past, we were enemies like these against God.

28 And yet God loved us when we were His enemies, when we were doing things to destroy His glory. The apostle Paul, when his name was still Saul before he became a Christian, was one such example of an enemy of God. Let's read Acts 8:3: *As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.*

29 In the past, each one of us, before we received Christ, like Saul we were enemies of God, and we did many things to oppose God. But while we were still God's enemies, God loved us and Christ died for us.

BLESSINGS IN THE PRESENT

30 Justification also gives blessings for the present. Included in these blessings are the following:

PEACE

31 In the present, we have PEACE with God. Let's read Romans 5:1: *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

32 We have reconciliation with God. We are now friends with God. We have a relationship with God that will no longer be terminated or broken.

GRACE

33 In the present, the GRACE of God is the foundation on which we stand. Let's read Romans 5:2a: *Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand....*

34 The grace of God is the foundation on which our feet are firmly planted. In other words, all of God's dealings with us are based on His grace alone. We are saved by God grace alone; and our salvation will continue by God's grace alone. Let's remember this, God grace is His free favor which doesn't depend on our works. Whatever we are able to accomplish in the Christian life will happen only through the grace of God enabling us.

JOY

35 In the present, we have JOY in the midst of sufferings. Let's read Romans 5:3, 4: ³ *And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;* ⁴ *and perseverance, character; and character, hope.*

36 As Christians we are not exempt from trials as long as we are still in the world. But we have joy in the midst of sufferings, because we are assured that God is in control of everything that happens, so that the trials will result in something good and beautiful for our spiritual growth.

LOVE

37 In the present, the LOVE of God fills our hearts. Let's read Romans 5:5: *Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

38 We have assurance that God loves us now and forever. Because of His love in our hearts, we also learn to love God in return (1 John 4:19). And we also have the ability to love others, specially our Christian brothers and sisters (John 13:34, 35).

LIFE

39 In the present, we are being saved by the LIFE of Christ. Let's read Romans 5:10: *For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

40 Please note that the death of Christ accomplished our reconciliation with God, so that our relationship with God was restored. Now that we have this relationship with God, the life of Christ gives us the power and resources to supply all that we need in order to live worthily as children of God. The life of Christ means His present ministry as our High Priest (Hebrews 4:15, 16). His life also refers to His indwelling life that works within us through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20).

BLESSINGS IN THE FUTURE

41 Justification also gives us blessings in the future.

GLORY

42 In the future, we have the hope of sharing in the GLORY of God, which shall be revealed at the second coming of the Lord Jesus. Let's read Romans 5:2b: *... (we) rejoice in hope of the glory of God.* The grace of God saved us from the pit of sin. The grace of God will also take us to the glory of God. This is the meaning of the words from the hymn "Amazing Grace":

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.*

SAVED FROM WRATH

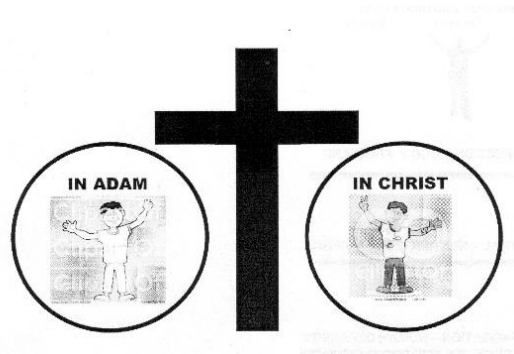
43 In the future, we also have the assurance that we will be saved from the WRATH of God's judgment. Let's read Romans 5:9: *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.*

44 This is the promise of the Lord Jesus in John 5:24: *“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”*

45 The three tenses (past, present, future) are covered by the promise of Christ:

- Past: Passed from death to life;
- Present: Has eternal life;
- Future: Shall not come into judgment.

IN ADAM OR IN CHRIST?



46 In Romans 5:12-21, the apostle Paul explains more fully the blessings of justification. To understand what Paul is saying, we must know about one great principle which God uses in dealing with people. This is the principle of the REPRESENTATIVE HEAD. In the Bible, there are two representatives – Adam and Christ. Adam was the FIRST representative; Christ is the SECOND representative.

47 Based on the principle of REPRESENTATIVE HEAD, all that the Representative does has effect on the people connected to him. In the beginning, all humanity was connected to Adam as the FIRST REPRESENTATIVE. Because of Adam’s sin, all the curses of sin have come down and affected all humanity. How can we be saved and escape from the effects of Adam’s sin?

48 God devised a plan. He sent Christ to become the SECOND REPRESENTATIVE. The moment we believe in Christ, God will transfer us from Adam and join us to Christ. This transfer is accomplished through JUSTIFICATION. Because we are now joined to Christ, all the effects of His obedience to God will come down to us as blessings that we receive in union with Him.

49 Let’s study carefully Romans 5:12-21, and let’s compare the CURSE in Adam versus the BLESSINGS in Christ:

CURSE IN ADAM	BLESSINGS IN CHRIST
Vs 15: Many died;	Vs 15: God's grace abounded to many;
Vs 16,18: Judgment & condemnation came to all;	Vs 16: Justification came;
Vs 17: Death reigned;	Vs 17: Those who receive grace will reign in life through Christ;
Vs 19: Many were made sinners;	Vs 18: Justification and life came to all who believe;
Vs 20: Sin abounded;	Vs 19: Many made righteous;
Vs 21: Sin reigned in death.	Vs 20: Grace much more abounded;
	Vs 21: grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

50 In summary: Under Adam, we became slaves of sin and of all the evil effects of his sin.

51 Under Christ, we will reign in life in union with Him!

CHALLENGE

52 In conclusion, may I ask you personally and directly: To which representative are you currently connected? Are you in ADAM? Or are you in CHRIST?

53 If you continue under Adam, sin will continue to rule over your life, and you will have to eat all of the bitter fruits of sin, until at last you will receive the ultimate punishment of sin, which is death; death not only of your physical body but the second death of your soul, which will be eternal separation from God and endless suffering in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8).

55 You may transfer from Adam to Christ today.

56 Believe in Christ and receive Him as your Savior and Lord right at this moment and God will transfer you from Adam to Christ. And in union with Christ, you will receive all the blessings we have enumerated in this lesson. God will give you all the blessings of justification that covers your whole life – past, present, and future.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 5:17: For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:17

LESSON 10:

VICTORY OVER SIN

1 Have you heard some Christians say the following:

- “I can commit sin as much as I like, because I already received Christ, and I’m sure I’m going to heaven.”
- “Doesn’t matter if I commit sin again and again, as long as I ask for forgiveness, and I’m sure the Lord will forgive me.”

2 Statements like those above contain wrong ideas which the apostle Paul wanted to correct. In Romans 6:1 the apostle Paul asked a question, which all Christians must answer: *Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*

3 Why did the apostle Paul ask such a question? He asked that question because some people misunderstood what he said in Romans 5:20: *But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.*

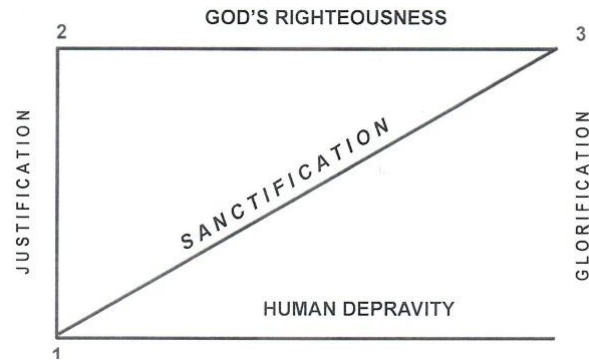
4 Those people thought this way: If grace increases when sin increases, therefore, let’s go ahead and sin more and more so that grace will abound more and more!

5 Let’s briefly review what we have learned from our past lessons. In Romans 1:18-3:20, the apostle Paul explained sin as the problem of people. In Romans 3:21-5:21 he explained the solution to the problem of sin, a solution planned and implemented by God Himself. This solution is the Gospel of Christ, which provides salvation from sin.

6 Let’s read Romans 1:16: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

7 The salvation Christ gives is salvation which delivers from sin. Let’s read again Matthew 1:21: *And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.*

8 Jesus is the Savior from sin. And the salvation He gives covers the three tenses of time: past, present, future. We will borrow an illustration used by Dr. Everett F. Harrison (Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 10) in order to understand more fully the three tenses of salvation.



- PAST: JUSTIFICATION.

This is pictured by the vertical line which connects 1 and 2. Formerly, we were in the position of HUMAN DEPRAVITY (Horizontal line #1). Through justification, we received forgiveness of sins and we received salvation from the PENALTY of sin (saved from the past guilt and punishment of sin). Then we were lifted up to the position of being fully accepted, as having met the standard of GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS through Christ's righteousness given to us as a gift like a pure white robe clothed around us (Vertical line #2). Through justification we receive eternal life; we have assurance of heaven and the new heaven and new earth; we are no longer liable to hell. The apostle Paul explains about HUMAN DEPRAVITY and about JUSTIFICATION in Romans 1:18-5:21.

Now, because I am no longer liable to hell, does this mean that I can continue in sin? No, because salvation has a meaning in the present.

- PRESENT: SANCTIFICATION.

This is pictured by the diagonal line, which connects 1 and 3. From the moment of justification, the process of sanctification begins, by which the perfect righteousness of Christ that's wrapped around us on the OUTSIDE is molded into us on the INSIDE by the Holy Spirit.

Through sanctification, we will experience salvation from the present POWER of sin. This process of sanctification will continue throughout our life until the second coming of Christ. The process of SANCTIFICATION is explained in Romans 6-8.

- FUTURE: GLORIFICATION.

At the second coming of Christ (Point #3), our salvation will be made complete. We will become fully transformed into the image of Christ in His perfect glorified humanity, and we shall be saved from the future PRESENCE of sin. All traces of sin will be erased from our lives and from all creation. The apostle Paul explains GLORIFICATION in Romans 8:17-25.

VICTORY OVER SIN

9 We have assurance of salvation. Our sins are all forgiven; we are guaranteed salvation from hell. However, we still live on earth, and while we are in this life we need to answer this question: HOW DO WE GAIN VICTORY OVER SIN? How will our process of sanctification continue? In Romans 6 we will discover three steps to victory over sin, expressed in these words: KNOW, RECKON, YIELD.

STEP 1: KNOW

10 To experience victory over sin, we must KNOW that we have been united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection; because of this union with Christ, the connection and power of sin over us have been cut off.

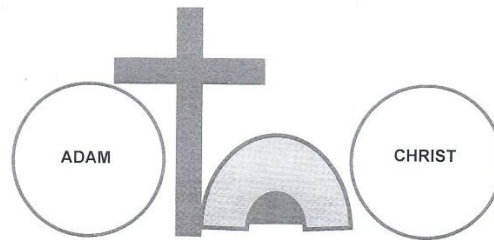
11 From our Bibles, let us read and meditate on Romans 6:1-10. From these verses we must know and believe 3 truths concerning our union with Christ:

- TRUTH 1: The Christian is united with Christ in His death.
- TRUTH 2: The Christian is united with Christ in His burial.
- TRUTH 3: The Christian is united with Christ in His resurrection.

12 How did this union with Christ happen? It happened through the principle of the REPRESENTATIVE HEAD, which we mentioned in the previous lesson. According to Romans 5:12-21, there are two representatives: Adam, the representative of sinful people; Christ, the representative of born-again people.

13 Every person born into this world is born in Adam. All humanity is initially united in Adam and subject to the curse and power of Adam's sin.

14 The moment a person believes in Christ, that person experiences new birth (John 3:3); he/she is taken out of Adam and is united to Christ. Those who are united with Christ are under the blessings and power of Christ.



15 Between the realm of Adam and the realm of Christ stand the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. God declares the Christian to be united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. This union means two things:

- First, through union with Christ, the Christian has died to sin; in other words, his connection to sin has been cut off; sin no longer has any power or right over the life of the Christian.
- Second, through union with Christ, the Christian rose to new life in relation to God; in other words, the Christian is now connected to God in a new life.

16 Study again the illustration above. Based on the PRINCIPLE OF THE REPRESENTATIVE, a person can only be under one representative or head. If you are in Adam, you are not in Christ. If you are in Christ, you are not in Adam.

17 The first step toward victory over sin is to KNOW and believe this truth of our union with Christ. This union with Christ is symbolized in the meaning of our water baptism. Let's read again Romans 6:3, 4:

³ Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

18 In baptism, when we were immersed into the water, this action symbolized our death and burial in union with Christ, and our connection to sin and to the old life in Adam also died and was buried.

19 When we were lifted out of the water, this action symbolized our resurrection in union with Christ, and that was the start of our new life connected to God, which is exclusively devoted to God.

20 The first step to victory over sin is to KNOW and always remember this truth of our union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

STEP 2: RECKON

21 The second step to victory over sin is to RECKON as true this declaration of God concerning our union with Christ. Let's read Romans 6:11: *Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

22 Let us reckon, consider, count as true and real that our relationship with sin is now dead, buried, and gone; let us reckon, consider, count as true and real that we have risen from the dead and we are now related and connected to God. What is contained in this step?

- First, let us agree with God that His declaration about us is true. God says, "You are now dead to sin; your relationship to sin has been cut off." We answer, "Yes, Lord, I am now dead to sin; my relationship to sin has been cut off."
- Second, we must reject and renounce any desire for sin that we feel moving in our heart. Even if we have received Christ, we will still feel the desires of sin, which have been embedded in our old life with its habits. However, because of our union with Christ, we must learn to say, "This desire for sin is part of my old life which died and was buried together with Christ. I am rejecting and renouncing that desire for sin. I am now dead to sin."

Remember: SIN did not die; but YOU died, therefore you cannot, must not anymore respond to sin. For example, SIN is still very much alive and delicious and good smelling like food; but no matter how delicious and good smelling the food is, when you bring it near the nose of a dead person, the dead corpse can no longer respond to the smell of the food. Similarly, no matter how attractive sin may be, you are now dead to sin and you cannot, you must no longer respond to it.

- Third, accept and agree with the God-given desire for holiness that you feel moving in your heart. After we receive Christ, we will become aware of a new desire toward holiness which moves us to draw near to God. We must learn to say, "This desire for holiness is the true nature of my new life in Christ. I accept and I fully go along with this holy desire."

23. That is STEP 2: RECKON yourself that you are truly dead unto sin and that you are now truly alive only unto God.

STEP 3: YIELD

24 This is the third step to victory over sin: YIELD the members (parts) of our body (our whole being) as instruments of righteousness. Let's read Romans 6:13:

And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

25 It's noteworthy that the parts of our body are called INSTRUMENTS; or in other translations, WEAPONS.

26 A soldier is only as effective as his weapons. Sin is your enemy soldier, and it wants to capture the parts of your body in order to use them as instruments or weapons to commit sin.

27 Righteousness is your fellow soldier. It also wants to use the parts of your body as its instruments or weapons to do righteousness.

28 What is the directive given to us in Romans 6:13? Don't give your body parts to be used by sin, the enemy soldier, as its instruments. Rather, give your body parts to righteousness, your soldier friend, for it to use as instruments or weapons to perform righteousness and holiness.

29 Here we see the most practical and effective step toward victory over sin. Without a weapon a soldier is useless. Therefore, deny and take away the weapons from sin, and sin will not be able to do anything. The weapons sin wants to use are our body parts. If we refuse to give sin any of our body parts, it will not be able to fight and defeat us. This is how we gain victory over sin.

30 On the other hand, if we yield (give, make available) our body parts to our friend soldier righteousness (holiness) for it to use, surely righteousness and holiness will be victorious in our life, and we shall gain victory over sin.

31 KNOW! RECKON! YIELD! These are the three steps to victory over sin.

- KNOW that you are united with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection.
- RECKON as true God's declaration that you are now dead to sin but now alive exclusively unto God.

- YIELD the parts of your body as instruments and weapons of righteousness and holiness.

DECISION

32 In order for the three steps to be effective in your life, you must make a firm decision. Let's read Romans 6:12: *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.*

33 In order to gain victory over sin, you must treat sin as an enemy king. And you must make a firm decision, and say, I refuse to allow sin to rule as king in my life anymore. Only Christ will be the true and exclusive Lord and Master and King of my life from now on.

34 When you make that decision, you may trust in the great and powerful resource God gives. Let's read Romans 6:14: *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

35 We Christians are now under grace. We are no longer under the law. What does this mean? Under the law, people were commanded to do good and to avoid sin, however the law did not give the power to obey its commands.

36 However, the Christian is now under grace. Under grace, the Christian is motivated from the inside by the Holy Spirit to obey God's command, and along with the motivation the Holy Spirit also gives the power to obey what God commands.

37 In Galatians 2:20, the apostle Paul gives his testimony regarding this: *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

38 No longer I but Christ! This is the powerful resource. We are able to hate sin because Christ lives in us and He hates sin. We are able to love righteousness because Christ lives in us and He loves righteousness. What we need to do is simple and easy; we only need to say to Christ, "Lord, You think through me, You love through me, You obey and serve God through me. It's no longer I but Christ!"

39 We will study this truth more fully in Romans 8.

CHALLENGE

40 We discovered in this study that this is the key to victory over sin: union with Christ. We are united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. This union with Christ is the meaning contained in our baptism.

41 In baptism, when we went down into the water, we declared to the world, “My old life in sin is now dead and buried together with Christ.”

42 When we came out of the water, we declared to the world, “I have now risen to new life in union with Christ in order henceforth to live for God alone.”

43 You who have been baptized already, just in case you have forgotten the meaning of your baptism, we challenge you to make a new commitment of yourself to God to turn your back and forsake sin, in order to face toward God and live for Him alone.

44 For those of you who have not yet been baptized, we challenge you to decide as soon as possible to obey Christ’s command regarding baptism.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 6:4: Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Romans 6:4

LESSON 11:

**FREEDOM
FROM THE LAW & FROM THE FLESH**

1 Every New Year, who of you makes a New Year’s resolution, when you promise to make changes for the new year? New Year’s resolutions or promises to improve are always good and all are intended to bring changes to our lives.

2 But in your experience, how long do New Year’s resolutions last? A few days? A few weeks? A few months?

3 Frankly, sooner or later, to use a Tagalog expression popular at one time, we are B-S-D-U... balik sa dating ugali, back to our old habits. Why? Because promises and intentions or even rules and regulations – the list of things we need to do or to avoid – which are all outside of ourselves, all of these have no power to change us.

4 We have already studied how to have victory over sin. In Romans 6 we learned the three steps toward victory over sin:

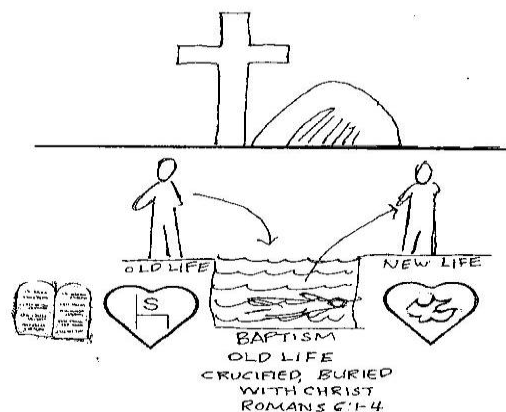
- STEP 1: KNOW
- STEP 2: RECKON
- STEP 3: YIELD

5 In order for these three steps to work effectively, from Romans 7 we will learn two important principles that we must always remember:

- PRINCIPLE 1: DON'T BE A SLAVE UNDER THE LAW.
- PRINCIPLE 2: HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH.

6 Here in Romans 7, we will discover that we have died to the law; our connection to the law has been cut off. As Christians we are no longer under the law, which dictates from the OUTSIDE what we should do and what we should not do. Let's read Romans 7:6:

But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.



- PRINCIPLE 1: DON'T BE A SLAVE UNDER THE LAW.

7 Let's study the illustration above.

8 In Romans 6 we learned that we were united with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. This union is symbolized by our baptism. When we went down into the water, that pictured the cutting off of our relationship to sin and the old life through our union with the death and burial

of Christ. And when we came out from the water, that pictured that we established a new relationship with God and with the new life through our union with Christ in His resurrection.

9 Here in Romans 7, we discover that through our union with Christ, our relationship to the law was also cut off in order that we may have a relationship with the Holy Spirit.

10 Before the coming of Christ on earth, God made a covenant with His people Israel. This was called the Old Covenant. This covenant was based on the law that God gave through Moses. The substance of this covenant is found in the Ten Commandments, which were written on two tablets of stone. The Ten Commandments may be compared to a loud speaker on the outside of people, and this loud speaker was constantly dictating on people from the outside what they were to do and what not to do. But the law had one big problem. The law of Moses did not give to people the power to obey the commandments which it was dictating from the outside.

11 Because of this, God promised that He will make a new covenant, in which He will write His laws in the hearts of people. Let's read Hebrews 8:10:

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

12 Let's look again at the illustration above. Through our union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, our relationship with Christ to the old covenant was cut off, so that it doesn't have any more effect on us; and through our union with Christ we have a new relationship with God in the new covenant. Let's read Romans 7:4:

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

IS THE LAW BAD?

13 Why, was the law that was given through Moses bad? No. In fact, everything that the law of Moses commanded were all good and beautiful. But there was one problem! Human nature was weak.

14 Look at the illustration above. Inside the heart of non-Christians, there sits the "S" (sinful SELF), which is the slave of fleshly desires. Because of this, people do not have the power to obey what the law commands. Instead, law even incites people to do sin. Why is that? Isn't it

the case that when you forbid something, people tend to do what is forbidden? This is the meaning of Romans 7:5:

For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.

15 In order for us to have victory over sin, two things must happen, and these two things happen through our union with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

- First, we must cut off our relationship to the law as a master who is always dictating on us from the outside. As Christians, we must no longer live by following a list of rules that's posted ON THE OUTSIDE as if on a blackboard, which we must continually review in order to obey them.
- Second, we must establish a relationship with the Holy Spirit, who lives within our heart and who continually guides and empowers us FROM THE INSIDE. As Christians we now live by continually discerning and obeying the promptings of the Holy Spirit from the inside while at the same time trusting in Him to give us the ability to do what He commands.

16 A poem expresses this very well”

Do this and live, the law demands,
But gives me neither feet nor hands.
A better word the gospel brings.
It bids me fly and gives me wings.

WHY THE LAW WAS GIVEN

17 But why did God give the law? There are three reasons why God gave the law in the Old Testament.

- First, the law was given to reveal to people what sin is. The law is like a mirror, which when we look into it we see the dirt on our faces. For example, how did the apostle Paul learn about the sin of covetousness? Let's read Romans 7:8:

⁷What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

- Second, the law was given in order to make people realize they were condemned as sinners. Through the law people realized that they had no power to become righteous before God. No matter how hard they try to obey the law, they will always fail and come short. Because of this, people will realize that they are under God's judgment and condemnation. Let's read Romans 3:19, 20:

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become ^{lel}guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

- Third, the law was given in order to lead people to Christ. Through the law, people saw what sin really was; they saw that they had no power to obey God's commandments, and that they were in grave danger of God's judgment. In other words, people realized they had no way to be saved through their own efforts. Because of this, people realized they needed a Savior. Let's read Galatians 3:23, 24:

²³ But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

18 The law was given not as a way of salvation for people. Rather, the law was given to lead people to the Savior.

- **PRINCIPLE 2: HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH**

19 In order to have victory over sin, we must heed and obey **PRINCIPLE 2: HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH**. We must not trust in our human ability or wisdom. In ourselves, we don't have sufficient power to obey all that the law demands.

20 The weakness of the flesh is clearly demonstrated by the experience of the apostle Paul. Let's carefully read Romans 7:14-24:

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. ¹⁶ If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. ¹⁷ But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. ¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. ¹⁹ For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. ²⁰ Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

²¹ I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring

against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*

21 Do you feel the desperate feelings of the apostle Paul? He wanted very much to obey God's commands, and he sincerely wanted to avoid committing sins. And yet, in spite of his intense desire to do good and to stop sinning, how did all his good intentions end? It all ended up in his committing the sin that he wanted to avoid.

22 Do you understand what the apostle Paul is saying? Have you had a similar experience? You desire very much to do good; you hate intensely doing bad. But in the end, you do the sin you didn't want to do, and you could not do the good you wished to do.

23 And what was the desperate cry of the apostle Paul in Romans 7:24? Listen to his very pitiful cry: "*O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*"

BOUND TO A CORPSE

24 The apostle Paul cried, "*Who shall deliver me from this body of death?*"

25 According to scholars, during the time of the apostle Paul, one way to punish murderers was to tie the corpse of the murdered person to the murderer, face to face, nose to nose, mouth to mouth, breast to breast, hand to hand, feet to feet, and the murderer will remain tied to that corpse while it slowly decomposes and causes infection on the murderer until that infection spreads to his entire body and makes him sick and he dies as a result.

26 According to scholars, the apostle Paul must have had in mind that kind of experience of being tied to a corpse when he cried out in Romans 7:24, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death." This body of death which Paul referred to was the old sinful human nature that was enslaved to all the sinful fleshly desires of his old sinful habits embedded in his natural body and mind and soul. His efforts, his resolutions, and all his promises to change, like New Year's resolutions, saying, "From now on, I will stop sinning, from now on, I will obey all of God's commandments!" – in spite of all that, he still continued to sin.

27 Because of this experience, the apostle Paul realized the weakness of human flesh. Because of this, we should heed and obey **PRINCIPLE 2: HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH.**

GOOD NEWS!

28 Thank God, there's good news!

29 When the apostle Paul came to the point of total hopelessness, when he cried in desperation, “Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” – it was at that point that he discovered the solution to his problem. Let’s read Romans 7:25: *“I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

30 When Paul had nowhere to go, he found the way of full salvation in Christ Jesus the Lord!

CHALLENGE FOR US

31 What is the challenge we get from the experience of the apostle Paul? The challenge is contained in the two principles we learned in this lesson:

- PRINCIPLE 1: DON’T BE A SLAVE UNDER THE LAW.

32 We don’t need any person or any law that dictates to us FROM THE OUTSIDE what to do or what not to do. We need to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit FROM INSIDE our hearts.

33 Does this mean that we no longer need to listen to Bible teachers? Does this mean we no longer need to listen to the preaching of God’s Word? No, that’s not what we mean.

34 No. Rather, this is what mean:

- Christians who are under the law are waiting for someone to tell them what to do or what not to do. For example, they need to be reminded, “Read your Bible, and pray everyday.” Or, “Attend Bible study.” Or “Attend the Sunday worship.” Or, “Witness for Christ.” When nobody reminds them of these things, they don’t do them. Such Christians are slaves of the law; they depend on someone from the outside to direct their lives.
- Christians who are under the law do their good deeds to be seen by people and in order to receive the praise of people. This is described by the Lord Jesus as the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20; 6:1, 5).
- Christians who are under the law avoid sin only for fear that others will see them. But if they think nobody is watching, they easily give in to temptations.

35 On the other hand:

- True Christians listen to and obey the Holy Spirit who speaks from inside their hearts. Even if nobody reminds them to read their Bible and to pray everyday, to attend Bible

study, to attend worship on Sundays, or to witness for Christ, they do these things because they are led by the Holy Spirit to do them.

- True Christians do their good works for God alone; they strive to receive only the praise that comes from God; they are now dead to what other people would say, whether praise or ridicule (Matthew 6:3-6; Galatians 1:10; Colossians 3:23-24).
- True Christians avoid sin even if nobody is watching. Why? Because they are continually aware of the leading of the Holy Spirit inside of them who is drawing them toward holiness and away from sin.
- PRINCIPLE 2: HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH.

36 The true Christian no longer puts confidence in his power or wisdom. Yes, he will strive with all his might; he will serve with all the power he possesses. But in all his striving and in all his serving, his confidence and hope are dependent on the Holy Spirit. This is what the apostle Paul means in these verses:

Philippians 4:13: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Colossians 1:29 (Amplified Version): For this I labor [unto weariness], striving with all the superhuman energy which He so mightily enkindles and works within me.

1 Corinthians 15:10: But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

37 Isn't the apostle Paul boasting here? He says, "I labored more abundantly than they all." What did he say? He labored more than all the other apostles? Wasn't Paul boasting? But did you notice his conclusion? "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

38 According to the apostle Paul, if ever he accomplished anything for the Lord, if ever it seemed that he surpassed the other apostles in service, he wanted everyone to know that he accomplished all these not because of his own strength. These were all made possible by the grace of God.

39 And we, too, no matter if we are the weakest Christians, if we have absolute trust and confidence in the Holy Spirit, we can also do all these things through Christ who strengthens us!

40 That is the challenge for us. Let us not wait for someone to tell us or remind us, “Do this” or “Do that”. Let’s listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit inside of us, and obey Him.

41 We must never say, “I can do that” or “I can’t do that”. Rather, let us say, “By the help of the Holy Spirit, I can do anything and everything that Christ wants me to do!”

42 Yes, we will have victory over sin! We can accomplish the three steps:

- STEP 1: KNOW.
- STEP 2: RECKON.
- STEP 3: YIELD.

43 With the help of the Holy Spirit we can do all that.

44 In our next lesson in Romans 8, we will learn how we can obey and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

45 But at this time, let me issue a call. I encourage you to make a new commitment of yourself to God, in regard to what we learned in this lesson.

46 Join in a prayer like this one:

LORD JESUS, FROM THIS DAY ON, I WILL NO LONGER WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO REMIND ME WHAT TO DO OR NOT TO DO. FROM NOW ON, I WILL LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FROM INSIDE OF ME.

LORD JESUS, FROM NOW ON, I WILL STOP TRUSTING IN MY ABILITY AND WISDOM. FROM NOW ON, I WILL STRIVE ALWAYS TO TRUST IN THE POWER AND GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

AND WITH THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, FROM NOW I WILL SEEK TO DO EVERYTHING TO PLEASE GOD ALONE AND NEVER MORE TO SEEK THE PRAISE OR APPROVAL OF PEOPLE. IN JESUS’ NAME. AMEN.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 7:6: But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Romans 7:6

LESSON 12:

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

1 As we continue our study regarding victory over sin, we now come to Romans 8. This chapter explains that victory over sin is grounded on the firm foundation of assurance of salvation.

THE FOUNDATION: NO MORE CONDEMNATION

2 Let's read Romans 8:1:

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who^[a] do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

3 No more condemnation! We will no longer come under judgment. After we believe in Christ and receive Him as our Savior and Lord, we are saved from the deep pit of sin and lifted up and made to stand on safe ground, in union with Christ, in a secure relationship with God that can no longer be broken.

4 The truth of assurance of salvation must be deeply implanted in our hearts and minds. Victory over sin stands solidly on that foundation. Assurance of salvation is guaranteed by our Lord Jesus in John 5:24:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

5 Christ guarantees 3 things for the Christian believer:

- First, in the PRESENT, the believer already has (possesses) eternal life.
- Second, in the FUTURE, the believer shall not come into judgment.
- Third, in the PAST, the believer has passed from death to life.

6 Let's combine these guarantees with the truths found in Paul's letter to the Romans and with the truths found in his letters to the Ephesians and Colossians.

7 Let's read Ephesians 2:4-9:

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

8 Let's read Colossians 3:1-4:

¹ If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

9 Here are the combined truths from Romans, Ephesians and Colossians:

- In union with Christ we died and were buried, resulting in the cutting off of our relationship to sin and to the old life.
- In union with Christ we were risen, resulting in our being joined in a permanent relationship to God and to the new life.
- In union with Christ we were raised up and seated with Him on the throne at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Here, in this position, no judgment can ever be charged against us.
- At the present time, our life is hid with Christ in God. Someday at the second coming of Christ, we shall be manifested in glory together with Him (read 1 John 3:1).

10 We repeat: Victory over sin stands solidly on the foundation of ASSURANCE OF SALVATION. For the Christian, no more condemnation awaits.

11 These truths from Romans, Ephesians and Colossians are shown in the illustration below. Let's study the illustration carefully.

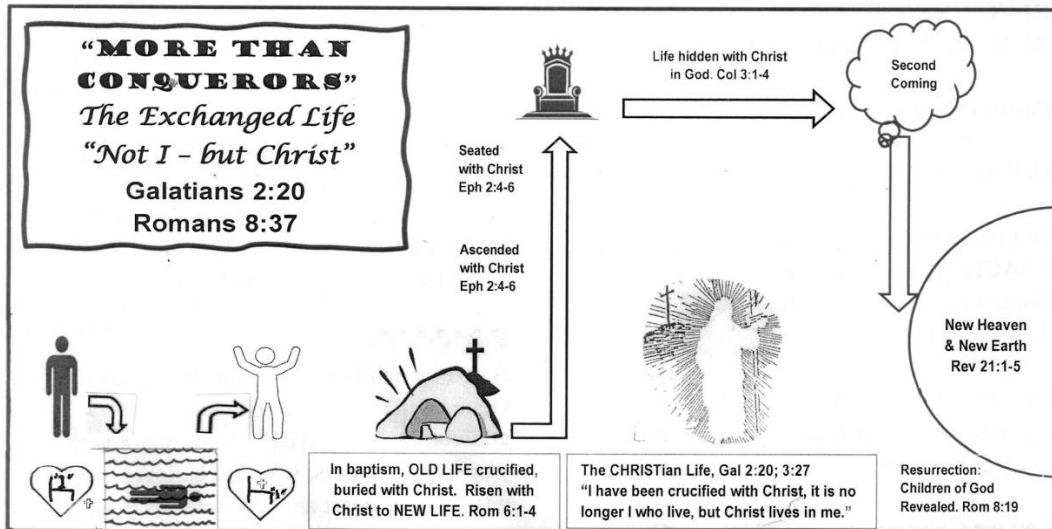
ONE QUESTION

12 According to Colossians 3:2, 3, at the present time, the life of the Christian is hid with Christ in God, and someday the Christian will be manifested at the second coming of Christ. The question is this: Who then is this person that is now living on the earth while his life is hidden in heaven with Christ?

13 This will help us to understand the answer of the apostle Paul in Galatians 2:20:

20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

14 Paul said, it is no longer I who live; it is Christ who now lives in me. And that is what Christians should say. It's no longer I but Christ who lives in me – that's the secret of victory over sin.



THE STRATEGY: THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

15 What's the strategy that God uses to give us victory over sin? It's the strategy of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ. Let's read Romans 8:2:

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

16 There are two laws that are contradictory to each other. On the one hand, there is the law of sin and death. On the other hand, there is the law of the Spirit in Christ.

17 The law of sin and death is the force that pulls us down to sin and death. This force uses as instrument the sinful flesh or old nature.

18 The law of the Spirit of life is the force that pulls us upward, toward holiness and life. This force was placed in us when we put our faith in Christ when we were born again. This force is no other than the Holy Spirit, that God caused to live in us. Through the UPWARD force of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to overcome the DOWNWARD force of sin and death.

19 Therefore, there are two kinds of people. Let's read Romans 8:4:

that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

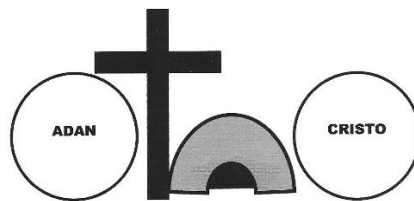
20 One kind is the PERSON WHO WALKS ACCORDING TO THE FLESH; this person is ruled by the law of sin and death. In other words, this is the person IN ADAM.

21 The second kind is the PERSON WHO WALKS ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT; this person is ruled by the law of the Holy Spirit. In other words, this is the person IN CHRIST.

22 The Christian has already transferred from Adam into union with Christ. This transfer was accomplished through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Let's read Romans 8:3:

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

23 Let's review our illustration from a previous lesson. Before we trusted in Christ, we were in Adam; after we trusted in Christ, we were transferred to be in Christ.



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MIND

24 Now, this is the problem for the Christian: HOW TO WALK AFTER THE SPIRIT, and how to avoid walking after the flesh.

25 The secret of victory is found in the right use of the mind. Let's read Romans 8:5-8:

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal

mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

26 The secret of victory is WHERE YOU SET YOUR MIND ON. What does your mind contain? What do you think on continually? If your mind is focused on sin and on the sinful desires of the flesh, you will surely end up doing those things. If your mind is focused on holiness and on the things of the Holy Spirit, you will surely end up doing those things.

27 This is what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, 35:

³⁴ For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. ³⁵ A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

28 Your mouth will speak what your heart is full of. The thoughts that fill your mind will eventually spill out as words out of your mouth.

29 Out in the province, in earlier days, women used to carry jars on their heads containing water or milk or even vinegar.

30 Now, here's a question: If someone accidentally bumps you while you're carrying a jar on the top of your head, what will spill out from the jar?

31 The answer: Of course, whatever your jar contains, that's what will spill out, whether it's water or vinegar or milk.

32 Our mind and heart are like a jar. We fill our mind and heart with different thoughts. When Satan bumps us with his temptations, what do you think will spill out of us? Whatever our heart and mind contain, that's what will spill out, either good thoughts or bad thoughts, whichever we have filled our mind and heart with.

33 Therefore, it is absolutely important what we fill our minds with. It is critical what we put in our mind and heart. This is why Psalm 119:9, 11 is key:

⁹ How can a young man cleanse his way?

By taking heed according to Your word.

¹¹ Your word I have hidden in my heart,

That I might not sin against You.

34 Equally important is Colossians 3:16:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom . . .

MEMORIZING GOD'S WORD

35 One effective way to fight temptation and sin is memorizing God's Word. Every time we memorize God's Word, we are filling our mind and heart with holy and good thoughts. And as we fill our mind and heart with God's Word, the Holy Spirit uses it to cleanse us from the pollution of sin.

36 There is one principle regarding the human mind that will help us to overcome sin. We can only think of ONE THING at a time. Try to think of two things at the same time. Impossible.

37 This is the principle of memorizing the Word of God. Every time Satan tries to put an evil thought into your mind, immediately think of God's Word; recite one verse of scripture which you have memorized. And you will be amazed that evil thoughts cannot enter your mind while you fill your mind and heart with God's Word.

38 In conclusion, let's review what we have studied in this lesson:

- FOUNDATION FOR VICTORY: ASSURANCE OF SALVATION. NO MORE CONDEMNATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN.
- STRATEGY FOR VICTORY: LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE.
- THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMORIZING GOD'S WORD.

CHALLENGE

39 Now, the question for us is this: WHAT DO YOU USUALLY FILL YOUR HEART AND MIND WITH? THE WORD OF GOD? OR WORLDLY THOUGHTS?

40 This is the final challenge of our lesson:

41 Beginning today, let's memorize God's Word. Let's fill our hearts and minds with God's Word. Let's begin by memorizing Galatians 2:20.

MEMORIZE:

Galatians 2:20: I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20

LESSON 13:

THE HOLY SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE PART 1

1 Two questions for everyone:

- Question 1: Why are there balloons that fly upward, and balloons that fall to the ground?
Answer: Balloons filled with helium fly upward; balloons filled with ordinary air fall to the ground.
- Question 2: I hold a nail in my hand; how can I make it float in water? Answer: I nail it to a piece of wood, and it will float because it is attached to the wood.

2 These two illustrations of the balloons and the nail are illustrations of the Holy Spirit-filled life. The only way for a Christian to overcome sin and to serve God fruitfully is through the Holy Spirit-filled life.

3 The person who is not filled with the Holy Spirit is like the balloon that's filled with ordinary air; that balloon will surely fall to the ground. Similarly, the Christian who is filled only with human strength and wisdom will surely be defeated by temptations and sin. But filled with the power and wisdom from the Holy Spirit, the Christian will be able to overcome temptation and sin and will become effective and fruitful in serving the Lord.

4 The nail also illustrates a person who is not filled with the Holy Spirit. The nail will automatically sink once you drop it in the water. But if you attach the nail to a piece of wood, it will no longer sink but float because it is attached to the piece of wood. In the same way, a person who is not filled with the Holy Spirit but is only filled with human ability and wisdom, will surely be defeated by Satan. But the Christian who is filled with the Holy Spirit will have the power to overcome the enemy.

5 In our study of Romans 8, we have several questions that we must answer regarding our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 1: DO YOU HAVE THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT?

6 This is the first question: Are you sure that you have the indwelling Holy Spirit? Let's read Romans 8:9:

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

7 Let's repeat the second part of the verse: *Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*

8 In other words, if you don't have the indwelling Holy Spirit, you are not a true Christian!

9 In your opinion, are you a true Christian? Are you sure you have the indwelling Holy Spirit?

10 How do we receive the Holy Spirit? Do we pray something like this:

"Holy Spirit, I receive You now in my life; please come into my heart."

11 No, we don't pray a prayer like that. The Holy Spirit is God's gift the moment we put our faith in Christ and receive Him as our Savior and Lord. Let's read Galatians 4:6:

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

12 Let's analyze this verse carefully. To whom does God send the Holy Spirit? To His children.

13 Therefore, we need to ask: How do I make sure that I am a child of God? Let's read John 1:12:

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

14 It's very clear, right? Those who believe and receive Christ, they are the ones who are given the right to become children of God. Therefore, the question is this: Did you sincerely and truly believe in Christ and receive Him as your Savior and Lord?

15 If you are sure that you have received Christ, then this is God's promise, you are a child of God and God has sent His Spirit to come and live in you.

QUESTION 2: HOW DO I KNOW THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IN ME?

16 This is the second question: How do you know that the Holy Spirit is really in you? Very simple.

17 Do you remember the saying, Where there's smoke, there's fire?

18 Or let's use another illustration: For example, at the office, how do you know that the janitor has been there? Well, you know because the trash has been removed, the dust on the table has been wiped, and the bathroom has been cleaned.

19 In the same way, when the Holy Spirit has come to indwell the heart of a Christian, there will be evidences of His presence.

20 Let's study carefully the following evidences:

- EVIDENCE 1: The Holy Spirit will cleanse your life.

21 Let's read Romans 8:12, 13:

¹² Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

22 He is called the HOLY Spirit. When He enters your life, the first thing He does will be to sweep away all the habits and vices of the sinful flesh. He will convict you about the sinful thoughts and sinful habits that you used to indulge in; He will give you a hatred for sin; and He will help you to reject and remove from your life all these sinful things.

23 What are the works of the sinful flesh? Let's read the list given in Galatians 5:19-21:

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

24 How do you know that the Holy Spirit lives in you? You will know because He will cleanse away from your life the works of the sinful flesh.

25 But if you are still continuing to do these sinful works of the flesh, let me give you a strong warning: You don't have the Holy Spirit living in you, and you are not a true Christian. You must repent right now, and sincerely receive Christ as your Savior and Lord.

- EVIDENCE 2: YOU WILL EXPERIENCE THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

26 Let's read Romans 8:14:

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

27 If the Holy Spirit truly lives in you, He will teach you, He will guide you, He will lead you.

28 For example, how do you experience the leading of the Holy Spirit?

- (a) The Holy Spirit will give you a hunger and thirst for God's Word. Let's read 1 Peter 2:2:

As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.

The pure spiritual milk is nothing else but the Word of God, which is also called the spiritual bread or food (Matthew 4:4).

- (b) The Holy Spirit will give you the desire and ability to pray to God. Let's read Romans 8:15:

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

If the Holy Spirit is truly in you, He will motivate you to call God as your Father (Abba in the original language). As a guide, use the Lord's Prayer which the Lord Jesus taught in Matthew 6:9-13.

- (c) If the Holy Spirit is truly indwelling you, He will give you inner assurance that you are now a true child of God. As God's child, you are a joint-heir with Christ in all the riches of God and you have the hope of future glory. However, be reminded that as a child of God you may experience trials and persecutions for the sake of Christ. Let's read Romans 8:16, 17:

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified.

(d) If the Holy Spirit is truly in you, He will help you in all the trials and sufferings that may come to you. Let's read Romans 5:2-5:

³ And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces ^[b]perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, ^[c]character; and character, hope. ⁵ Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

29 Are you sure the Holy Spirit is in you? Have you experienced these evidences of His presence and working in your life?

- Do you experience the Holy Spirit continually cleansing your life?
- Do you regularly experience His leading?
- Do you have a thirst and hunger for God's Word?
- Do you have the desire and ability to pray?
- Do you hear the Spirit's voice giving you inner assurance that you are a child of God?
- Do you experience the Holy Spirit giving you ability and joy in order to overcome the trials that come to you?

CHALLENGE

30 In conclusion, this is the challenge for you:

Are you really sure that you are filled with the Holy Spirit? Even in the Old Testament, God made it clear that His people can only live for God and serve Him through the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's read Zechariah 4:6:

*“This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel:
'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,'
Says the LORD of hosts.*

31 In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus also emphasized the importance of the Holy Spirit's power. Let's read Acts 1:8:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be ^[e]witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

32 Therefore, this is the challenge for all:

- First, if you are not sure that you have received Christ as your Savior and Lord, you may do so right now.
- Second, if you are sure that you have received Christ, but you want to be assured that you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you may also come forward and receive a special Bible lesson regarding this. If you have studied this lesson before, we encourage you to review the lesson regularly.
- Reminder to all: Everyone is challenged to make this firm commitment:

Lord Jesus, in my own self I don't have sufficient ability or wisdom to be a victorious and fruitful Christian. I need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I am asking you now, Lord Jesus, fill me with your Holy Spirit. Amen.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 8:5: For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Romans 8:5

LESSON 14:

THE HOLY SPIRIT-FILED LIFE

Part 2

1 The Christian life is completely a life in the Holy Spirit, empowered by the Holy Spirit and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

- a. We are born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, 5);
- b. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit as a mark that we are children of God (Romans 8:15, 16; Galatians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20);

- c. We have been baptized (placed into) the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, and have been made to drink (to receive, to fully share in the life) of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13);
- d. We are commanded:
 - (1) To be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18);
 - (2) To live and walk in the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25);
 - (3) Not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30);
 - (4) Not to quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19);
 - (5) To test every spirit (1 John 4:1-3).

YOU HAVE ALL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

2. Please carefully look at 1 Corinthians 12:13.

This verse emphasizes that Christians fully share in the life of the Body of Christ. The life of the Body is the Holy Spirit. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, what does every Christian "drink" of?

3. To "drink" of the Holy Spirit means to receive Him. Every Christian has received the Holy Spirit. Some Christians ask: "How do I know I have the Holy Spirit?"

(a) According to Galatians 4:6 and Romans 8:15, to whom does God give Holy Spirit?

(b) The Holy Spirit begins to live in us the moment we are born again. Otherwise, what does Romans 8:9 say?

4. Without the indwelling Holy Spirit, you are not, you cannot be, a true Christian. If you are a Christian, know that the Holy Spirit lives in you. We need to emphasize this truth: When the Holy Spirit first comes into the believer at conversion, HE COMES IN AS A FULL AND COMPLETE PERSON, not only half of Him or even just a portion of Him. No subsequent

spiritual experience will add more of the Holy Spirit to the believer. When the Holy Spirit entered your life when you were born again, He came in as a complete Person.

DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT HAVE ALL OF YOU?

5. A bothersome question arises: If all Christians have the Holy Spirit, how is it that so few experience the rivers of living water promised by the Lord Jesus that the Holy Spirit will give (John 4:14; 7:37,38)? Doesn't this prove that some Christians have more of the Holy Spirit, and others have less?

6 Someone diagnosed the problem accurately: Yes, you have all of the Holy Spirit. The question is, does the Holy Spirit have all of you?

DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT HAVE ALL OF YOU?

7 We need to understand this truth clearly: We must be filled with the Holy Spirit. To be filled means that the Holy Spirit controls our entire personality, and that you are continually living under the full control and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

THE ABSOLUTE REQUIREMENT: YOU MUST MAKE SURE YOU ARE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT!

Zechariah 4:6: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

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.

PRAYERFULLY EXAMINE YOURSELF USING SIX STEPS

8 The following six steps serve as a guide toward the Holy Spirit-filled life. You may have taken these or similar steps before, but it always helps to re-evaluate your life by these steps. But please remember, these "steps" are simply guidelines about important actions you need to take in order to prepare yourself to be fully empowered and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

STEPS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

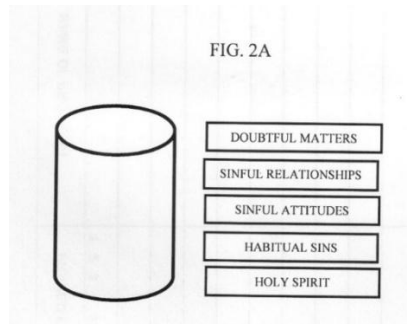
STEP 1: KNOW THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT LIVES IN YOU.

Are you sure that you have received Christ? The first step to the Holy Spirit-filled life is to thank God for giving you His Holy Spirit when you received Christ as your Lord and Savior (Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:6). In the space below, write a prayer expressing your gratitude for the Holy Spirit's indwelling.

STEP 2: REMOVE THE THINGS THAT BLOCK THE HOLY SPIRIT.

(a) In Ephesians 4:30, what are we commanded to stop doing?

(b) When the Holy Spirit is grieved (blocked), He cannot flow freely in us and through us. What things block the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:17-5:17)?



Let's use a simple illustration (Figure 2A): Your leader will give each one of you: (1) a PAPER CUP; (2) 5 blank strips of paper; on each strip write one of these phrases: "Holy Spirit", "Habitual Sins", "Sinful Attitudes", "Sinful Relationships", "Doubtful Matters".

The paper cup represents your life. Put the strip "Holy Spirit" at the bottom of the cup; this means that when you received Christ, the Holy Spirit came to live in you. Now, stuff the other strips into the cup; this means that these things ("Habitual Sins", "Sinful Attitudes", "Sinful Relationships", "Doubtful Matters") are blocking the Holy Spirit in your life. Before you can experience the Holy Spirit-filled life, you must remove these things from your life; you must confess and forsake all your "Habitual Sins", "Sinful Attitudes", "Sinful Relationships", "Doubtful Matters".

TWO "STUMBLING BLOCK" AREAS. There are two areas which cause many Christians to stumble and which render them unfit to serve God. See below how the Lord Jesus wants you to deal with these two areas.

(c) Examine your heart in the light of God's Word. Take a separate piece of paper and write on it every sin that the Holy Spirit convicts you of.

- (1) Habitual sins.
- (2) Sinful attitudes.
- (3) Sinful relationships.
- (4) Doubtful matters.
- (5) Two “stumbling block” areas to deal with:

The Lord Jesus focused on two areas that cause many Christians to stumble. Honestly answer the questions related to each area.

- CURSING, ANGER, UNFORGIVENESS, RECONCILIATION

Matthew 5:21-25

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to those ^[d]of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother ^[e]without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ ^[f]shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ^[g]‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of ^[h]hell fire. ²³ Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Question 1: Do you confess and forsake the sin and habit of using curse words against people that you despise or hate?

Question 2: Are you ready to forgive and forget the wrong done to you by another person?

Question 3: Are you ready to make the first step to reconcile and mend a broken relationship with someone?

- IMPURE THOUGHTS, PORNOGRAPHY, FORNICATION, ADULTERY

Matthew 5:27-30:

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said ^[i]to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to ^[j]sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into

hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to ^[k]sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Question 1: Do you confess and forsake the sin of indulging in lustful adulterous thoughts; to confess and forsake sinful sexual habits of self-stimulation?

Question 2: Do you decide today to throw away and stop using pornographic materials (magazines, pictures, movies, online sites, etc.)?

Question 3: Do you decide today to terminate sinful relationships that involve extra-marital sexual activities?

Question 4: Do you commit today to live in sexual purity in obedience to God's command that sex is reserved only for biblical marriage between one man and one woman?

READY FOR THE MASTER'S USE

2 Timothy 2:20, 21:

²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. ²¹ Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor; ^[h]sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

(d) Holiness and purity are absolute requirements if you want to be used by God.

For the sake of our illustration, do the following actions:

ACTION 1: Get a cup; this will represent your life. Make a list of all the sins you need to confess and forsake and put your list inside the cup. This step illustrates that you recognize these sins, habits and relationships as **BLOCKAGES** to the Holy Spirit in your life and you want get rid of these.

ACTION 2: Hold up your cup to God and say a sincere prayer of **CONFESSION** of all these sins, habits and relationships and ask for God's full **FORGIVENESS & CLEANSING** of all these sinful things through the **BLOOD** of the Lord Jesus.

ACTION 3: After making your confession, thank God and **CLAIM** His forgiveness and cleansing based on 1 John 1:9.

ACTION 4: Now, as a final action, take out from your cup the LIST of all your sins, habits and relationships, TEAR into small pieces the list and throw the torn pieces into a trash can. Now, your cup is CLEAN, and the Holy Spirit inside of you is now free to flow without any blockages.

You are ready to proceed to the next step toward the Holy Spirit-filled life.

STEP 3: SURRENDER YOUR LIFE FULLY AND UNRESERVEDLY TO GOD.

(a) Summarize Romans 12:1,2 in your own words.

(b) To be filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit, surrender every part of your life to His control. To symbolize your surrender, lift up your paper cup to God. Your life is like this paper cup. After removing the dirt that blocks the Holy Spirit, give your life (your paper cup) completely to God for His exclusive use. Take this step of full surrender by sincerely praying:

"Dear heavenly Father, I now fully surrender my whole life to You, spirit, soul, and body, all that I am, all that I have, all my relationships, and all the days of my life. From now on I am Yours alone and Yours forever. In Christ's name. Amen."

If you have prayed this prayer before, pray this prayer again to recommit your life today. After praying, complete the record below:

TODAY, I COMMITTED/RECOMMITTED MY LIFE TOTALLY TO THE LORD.

DATE _____

TIME _____

PLACE _____

STEP 4: CLAIM BY FAITH THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

(a) You became a child of God by asking in faith for Christ to come into your life. Similarly, you receive the filling of the Holy Spirit by asking in faith that God will fill you with His Holy Spirit. Your faith should be based on these truths:

(1) GOD COMMANDS you to be filled with His Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18);

(2) GOD PROMISES to grant your request to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13);

(3) GOD GUARANTEES to answer to answer prayer that is based on his will and promise (1 John 5:14,15).

(4) Pray this prayer in faith:

"Heavenly Father, You promised to give the Holy Spirit to all who ask. You also commanded me to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, I ask You now, Father, to fill me, possess me, and control me with Your Holy Spirit. By faith in Your promise and in obedience to Your command I now ask for and claim the filling of the Holy Spirit. Thank You for filling me now. In Christ's name. Amen."

If you prayed this prayer before, ask again for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit. After praying, complete the record below:

TODAY, I CLAIMED/RECLAIMED THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

DATE _____
TIME _____
PLACE _____

(b) After this prayer of faith, act upon God's promise. From this moment on, always confess and declare that the Holy Spirit has taken control of your whole life. See Fig. 2. As you go about your daily tasks, always count on the presence, power, and control of the Holy Spirit. At the beginning of each day, take time to meditate on the fact that He has filled you and is filling you. As you do your work during the day, maintain the attitude of dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

(c) How about "special feelings" or "experiences"? Some Christians testify of "special feelings" or "experiences" connected to the filling or baptism with the Spirit (powerful emotions of joy, deep repentance, peace, etc.). God may bless you with them and thank God for them. But don't put your confidence on "feelings" or "experiences". Always walk by faith. Your confidence is on God's will (Ephesians 5:18), God's promise (Luke 11:13), and God's guarantee (1 John 5:14,15). Feeling or no feeling, count on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in your life as you walk in continual faith and obedience moment by moment, step by step, doing what God shows you to do at the present moment.

STEP 5: WALK BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Read John 15:5 and Galatians 5:16-17, 22-25. To walk by the Holy Spirit means to abide continually in Christ and to live the Christ-centered life by faithfully maintaining the basic disciplines of the Christian life. Evaluate yourself with the help of the following questions:

(a) When and how much time do you give to the WORD of God through:

Hearing _____

Reading _____

Studying _____

Memorizing _____

Meditation _____

- (b) When and how much time do you give to PRAYER?
- (c) When and how much time do you give to FELLOWSHIP with other Christians?
- (d) When and how much time do you give to WITNESSING for Christ?
- (e) FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. Above all, to walk in the Spirit means to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as you allow Him to saturate you and to flow in and through your life with His nine-fold fruit (Galatians 5:22-23).

STEP 6: DISCERN, DEVELOP, AND DEPLOY YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

Steps 1-5 opens your whole being so that the Holy Spirit can begin to fill you with His power and blessing. The Holy Spirit provides channels through which He can flow through you to others. These channels are called spiritual gifts. Now, you are ready to ask: "What are my spiritual gifts?"

In NewLife Book 13: SPIRITUAL GIFTS you will learn more about spiritual gifts.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 8:15, 16: ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Romans 8:15, 16

LESSON 15:

VICTORY IN SUFFERINGS & PERSECUTIONS

1 Let me share the testimony of one Christian named Tony. His father was a successful businessman who owned two stores in their city. When Tony enrolled in college, his father got him a work at a store of a businessman friend. He became a working student, working during the day, going to school at night. At the store, he began as an ordinary laborer, doing whatever he was told to do. Often, he was no different from the other laborers. In Tagalog, “trabahong kalabaw” (working like a carabao) at the store, while giving full diligence to his studies.

2 Tony testified that there were times when he shed tears, feeling sorry for himself, coupled with a feeling of resentment toward his father. He thought, “My father can afford to send me to school without me working. Why is he putting me through all this suffering?” He felt envious of his schoolmates, because he had no leisure time like they had. His day consisted of eat, study, work, sleep. But as an obedient son, Tony persevered as a working student. One consolation he had was that his father’s friend promoted him regularly, and he was given more and more responsibilities in practically all the aspects of the business.

3 Finally, graduation day came! Soon after graduation, his father surprised him with these words, “Tony, here’s the key to our other store. You’re now fully in-charge of running and building up your own business.”

4 And Tony suddenly realized the reason his father had made him to be a working student. The reason his father put him through all that suffering was to prepare him to manage his own store. Indeed, as a working student he learned all the aspects of running a store, from being an ordinary laborer to cashier, until his father’s friend made him practically the manager. Tony’s sufferings were not motivated by hard-heartedness, but rather it was motivated by the deep love of his father. And what happened to Tony? He became a successful businessman, who grew his business with twice more success than his father. Most important of all, Tony was a Christian who learned to trust and obey his heavenly Father. God gave him a Christian wife, with equally capable business sense. As a Christian business couple, they practiced Matthew 6:33 and Malachi 3:10 in their business, and God has used them to support God’s work and workers generously.

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRISTIANS

5 Tony’s experience of suffering as a preparation for his future as a businessman is an example for us Christians. We Christians must go through sufferings as a preparation for our glorious future in the kingdom of God.

6 In Romans 8:16-17 the apostle Paul happily declares our future destiny as Christians. We are children of God now. As His children, we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. But our high position as children and heirs is coupled with sufferings. Let's read Romans 8:16-17:

Romans 8:16-17:

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

7 Did you notice the last part of Romans 8:17? IF INDEED WE SUFFER WITH HIM, THAT WE MAY ALSO BE GLORIFIED TOGETHER.

8 There are sufferings that we Christians must go through before we will experience the glorious freedom which God is preparing for us!

9 Tony had to go through a lot of sufferings as a working student. He thought this was because his father did not love him, that's why he put him through all that suffering. But in the end, he understood his father's wisdom. His father was actually preparing him to receive his inheritance.

9a. By the way, Tony's story is a big contrast to the story of many sons of rich people who are given all the comforts and luxuries while in school. Many of them end up mainly pleasure-loving, not learning to be responsible or not learning to work. Many end up losing their inheritance in the end. There's a story about a son of Rockefeller, who, like Tony, was required by his multi-millionaire father to work. His friend told him, "If I were the son of Rockefeller, I will not work." The Rockefeller son replied, "If you're a son of Rockefeller, you WILL work!"

10 What are the sufferings that Christians must go through? There are two kinds of sufferings which Christians have to experience.

SUFFERINGS CAUSED BY SIN

11 The first category of sufferings which Christians and everyone else cannot avoid is that which resulted from sin. Because of the sin of Adam and Eve, the world and the whole creation came under a curse. Let's go back to Genesis 3:17-19:

Genesis 3:17-19:

¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':

"Cursed is the ground for your sake;

In toil you shall eat of it

All the days of your life.

¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall [□]bring forth for you,

And you shall eat the herb of the field.

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

Till you return to the ground,

For out of it you were taken;

For dust you are,

And to dust you shall return.”

12 What curse did God pronounce on humanity and on the earth and on all creation? Sufferings which resulted from sin – painful labor, tiredness, diseases, deterioration of strength, aging, death and decay. All people, Christian and non-Christian, all are affected by this curse.

13 In Paul’s letter to the Romans, he explained that this curse pronounced on the earth brought extreme sorrow. However, God promised that someday, all creation will be delivered from this curse. When will this deliverance come? This deliverance will come at the second coming of Christ, when at that time Christians will be glorified. For this reason, all creation waits with intense longing for the glorification of Christians. Let’s read Romans 8:19-23:

Romans 8:19-23:

¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; ²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

14 In verses 19-22, we see the suffering of all creation because of the curse of sin. In verse 23 we see that, though the Holy Spirit lives in us, even we Christians cannot avoid the sufferings in our physical bodies which are brought on by the curse of sin. In spite of the fact that we are children of God, we still need to work; we experience tiredness; we catch various diseases; we go through aging and suffer the pains of aging; and someday we will die physically and suffer corruption. All these bring all kinds of sufferings.

15 This is the reason why we are eagerly waiting, together with all creation, the second coming of Christ. At His return, we shall experience the full blessing of our adoption as children of God, and at that time we shall fully receive the redemption of our physical bodies at the resurrection.

16 You have probably seen and heard on radio and tv preachers who teach the message described as HEALTH, WEALTH, & PROSPERITY GOSPEL. According to this teaching, when you receive Christ as your Savior, you may receive healing from all sicknesses, you will become wealthy, and you will be blessed with material prosperity.

17 Yes, Christ heals illnesses and diseases today. But this doesn't mean that Christian will no longer get sick.

18 Yes, God promises to supply all our needs (Philippians 4:19). But this doesn't mean that you will live in luxury.

19 Yes, there is a prosperity promised by Christ. But this prosperity is spiritual more than material. And this prosperity is based on the principle of always putting God first and His kingdom (Matthew 6:33).

20 And according to Romans 8:19-23, Christians will still have to go through sufferings in this world because of the evil results and the curse of sin upon the whole world.

SUFFERINGS FROM PERSECUTIONS

21 There is a second category of suffering that will inevitably come to Christians. These are sufferings caused by persecutions. The Lord Jesus Himself did not hide this sad fact. Let's read His sober reminder.

John 15:18-19:

¹⁸ "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

John 16:33:

³³ These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you ^[1]will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

22 Here in the letter of the apostle Paul to the Romans, he clearly reminded all Christians that they will experience sufferings brought about by persecutions from enemies. Let's read Romans 8:35-36:

Romans 8:35-36:

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 Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”*

23 Yes, we are now the children of God, we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Yes, the Holy Spirit now lives in our hearts. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that we are free or exempted from sufferings.

24 While we are still living in this world, we will continue to experience the painful effects of sin on the whole creation.

25 And if we truly remain faithful to Christ, sooner or later, there will be non-Christians who will hate us and they will be motivated by Satan to persecute us. In fact, there are places now in the world where Christians are being persecuted, even killed. For example, in India, Hindu fanatics are persecuting and killing Christians. In mainland China, the communist government continues to persecute Christians, imprisoning many of them, killing some of them. And we know in the Middle East, in Muslim countries, they arrest, torture and kill Christians.

26 Here's a personal question for you: How about you, what kind of persecution are you experiencing because of Christ? Who of you have been arrested and imprisoned? Who of you have been tortured because of your faith in Christ? Have you heard of anyone in the Philippines of any Christian who has been sentenced to death because of their faith in Christ?

27 I am sure that nobody in the Philippines have experienced such persecutions as imprisonment, torture and death.

28 Compared to other nations, the persecutions we suffer here in the Philippines are very light. Yes, once in a while, we may be laughed at and ridiculed. Once in a while, people avoid us and don't greet us. Once in a while, when we are witnessing, people close their door to us, or say insulting words to us. Perhaps, the most painful persecution Christians experience in the Philippines is to be disowned by parents and family members, and by relatives and friends. But all that is nothing compared to the imprisonments, tortures and death, which many Christians in other parts of the world are experiencing.

HELP IN TIMES OF PERSECUTION

29 The Bible teaches clearly that true Christians will go through sufferings.

30 What help is available to aid us when we are going through sufferings?

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S HELP

31 First, when we are going through sufferings, we are assured of the Holy Spirit's help. Let's read Romans 8:26-27:

Romans 8:26-27:

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession ^[g]for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷ Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

32 When going through sufferings, a powerful defense is prayer. Through prayer we will receive all that we need to enable us to overcome all trials and sufferings.

33 But there is one problem about prayer. There are times when our faith is weak and we feel unable to pray. Who will help us in the hour of our weakness.

34 During such times, it is the Holy Spirit who is our constant companion and He is always ready to help us. He will teach us to pray. Not only that, He Himself will pray on our behalf. He is our intercessor!

35 According to Romans 8:26, there are times in prayer when no understandable words issue from our lips, we only groan in our spirit. We do not know exactly what to say. We just feel that we are crying out to God.

36 In such moments, it will be the Holy Spirit who will pray on our behalf. And according to Romans 8:27, God understands the petitions of the Holy Spirit. And surely God will answer the Holy Spirit's prayer because He always prays according to the will of God.

37 Christ sent the Holy Spirit to be our permanent Companion in life. He will be the one to teach us all things we need to know. Let's read John 14:26.

John 14:26:

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

38 The Holy Spirit will also help us in our physical weaknesses. Let's read Romans 8:11.

Romans 8:11:

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies ^[d]through His Spirit who dwells in you.

39 In our service to the Lord, specially in witnessing for Christ, the Holy Spirit is the one who will give us the power and ability. Let's read Acts 1:8.

Acts 1:8:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be ^[c]witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

CHRIST'S HELP

40 Second, when we are going through suffering, we can depend on the help of Christ. Why, who is Christ to us? Christ is the one who died for our sins; Christ is the one who rose again for our salvation. And Christ is now the one who is ministering as our High Priest before God the Father, and He is continually interceding for us. Let's read Romans 8:34.

Romans 8:34:

Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

41 We can depend on Christ always to give us victory. Let's read Romans 8:37.

Romans 8:37:

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

GOD THE FATHER'S HELP

42 Thirdly, when we are going through trials and sufferings, we can depend on the help of God the Father. We can always trust Him to be with us, that He will always be on our side. Let's read Romans 8:31.

Romans 8:31:

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

43 There is one saying, ONE WITH GOD IS A MAJORITY. Indeed, the world may see you as being alone, and yet if God is with you, nothing and no one in the whole universe can defeat you.

44 God the Father promised to give everything that we need. There is nothing that God will ever withhold from us when we pray according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Let's read Romans 8:32.

Romans 8:32:

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

45 God the Father is the one who justified us. He has fully accepted us as His children. We are no longer under His judgment, and it's guaranteed that there is no one who can ever bring any accusation against us before Him. Let's read Romans 8:33.

Romans 8:33:

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

46 And it is absolutely certain that no one or nothing has any power to separate us from the love of God. Let's read Romans 8:38-39.

Romans 8:38-39:

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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

CHALLENGE

47 We began our lesson with the testimony of Tony. We saw that his sufferings as a working student was part of his father's plan for his good future. But in the case of Tony, there was not ever a time when his father was with him in his sufferings.

48 That is where God the Father is different from our physical fathers. Yes, like Tony's father, God allows us to go through sufferings; these are part of His plan for the glorious future that He is preparing for us.

49 But here is where God the Father is different. God is always with us when we are going through trials and sufferings. Did you hear that? **GOD IS WITH US WHILE WE ARE GOING THROUGH TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS.**

50 Not only God the Father is with us. The Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – the Triune God is with us while we are going through trials and sufferings in life. The Three Persons – Father, Son, Holy Spirit – are upholding us, helping us, rescuing us, guiding us, comforting us, strengthening us.

51 Therefore, what should be our attitude? What should be our way of life?

- First, all the time, we must remember that God is with us. We must constantly remind ourselves: “God is here now and He is with me at this very moment.”
- Second, no matter what happens, no matter the situation, always give thanks to the Lord.
- Third, no matter what happens, no matter the situation, we must pray something like this: “Lord, I know You have a plan in this situation. Teach me what to do. Help me to learn the lesson You are teaching me.” In our succeeding lesson, we explore more deeply what God’s plan is for our sufferings.
- Fourth, no matter what happens, no matter the situation, let us accept the sufferings that God is allowing to enter our lives, and always praise and trust Him as our God who is all powerful, all wise, and all loving.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 8:38-39: 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 created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39

LESSON 16:

THE BIG PICTURE

1 You have heard the expression, THE BIG PICTURE, right?

2 Let’s imagine a small ant on top of a table. This ant is crawling from the left hand side of the table toward the right hand side. When the ant reaches the middle of the table it is now located in its PRESENT TIME. The distance it has travelled behind it represents its PAST TIME; the distance that it will still travel in front of it represents its FUTURE TIME. For the ant, it only sees the SMALL PICTURE (the situation it is in at the present time). In this present situation it faces a problem: there is a pool of water in front of it. Which direction should it go, to the right or to the left? On top of that problem, it is very hungry; where can it find food? These two problems are truly big for the ant, because it only sees the SMALL PICTURE.

3 But for us who are looking down on the ant, because we are bigger and more powerful than the ant, we are able to see the BIG PICTURE. We see the whole history of the ant, from its past to its present and to its future. The ant does not know that there is a piece of bread that’s waiting

ahead in its future; it does not know that this piece of bread is on the left side of the table; it does not know there is a pool of water on its right hand side up ahead. If the ant had the ability to communicate with us, and it will ask help from us, we will be able to give it instructions as to which direction it should go to avoid the pool of water and to find the piece of bread. Or we can pick up the ant and immediately place it where the bread is located.

THE BIG PICTURE OF SALVATION

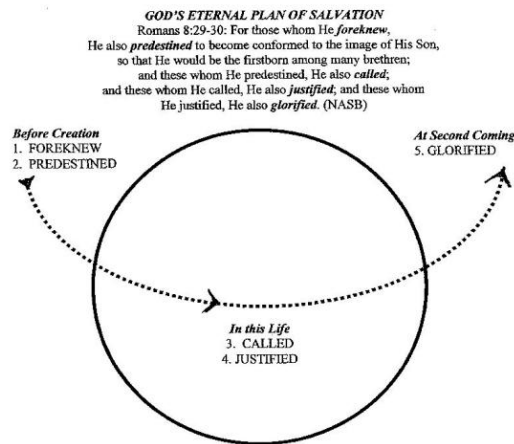
4 In our relationship with God, we are like the small ant. We can only see the SMALL PICTURE. But God sees the BIG PICTURE. And God already sees the whole history of our lives, from the beginning to the end; God sees the whole history of every person’s life. In fact, God sees the whole history of the entire world.

5 And concerning our salvation, God already sees the BIG PICTURE. Like the small ant, we humans can see only the SMALL PICTURE of our present situation. But God already sees the whole history of our salvation from beginning to end. Because God Himself composed the BIG PICTURE!

6 This is the clear revelation of Romans 8:29-30:

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

7 We can illustrate the BIG PICTURE through the diagram below:



8 The BIG PICTURE of our salvation contains five great actions of God.

- Before Creation
 1. Foreknew
 2. Predestined

- In this Life
 3. Called
 4. Justified

- At Christ's Second Coming
 5. Glorified

9 We will study these five actions of God in salvation one by one.

BEFORE CREATION

- ACTION 1: FOREKNEW

10 Even before the universe was created, long before humans were created, long before we were born, God already foreknew us. There, in eternity past, before God created the world, He already knew you were going to be born, on such a date and time, at such a place and country. Before you were conceived as a human being, God said, I know that Juan dela Cruz (or put your name here), will be born in Cavite City, in the country of the Philippines.

11 Isn't that just amazing? Before your mother gave you birth, God already knew you!

- ACTION 2: PREDESTINED

12 Not only did God know you before you were born. God PREDESTINED you to a glorious destination or goal. Before the world was created, God chose you to become His child, and He set you apart for a great purpose. What was this great purpose? To make you to become like His own Son Jesus Christ.

13 This is the meaning of salvation. First of all, salvation is not about escaping hell, and it is not about going to heaven. Yes, salvation includes both these blessings; if God saves you, of course, He will save you from hell; and, of course, He will take you to heaven.

14 But the primary reason that God FOREKNEW you and PREDESTINED you was in order for you to become like Christ in His perfect humanity.

15 Let's remember that these first two actions of God in salvation are included in the BIG PICTURE. We were not aware of these two actions. In fact, we do not come to know about salvation until we experience the third action of God.

IN THIS LIFE

- ACTION 3: CALLED

16 After we were born and grew up, one day we heard the Gospel of salvation which is in Christ Jesus. The Gospel came to us at different times. At what age did you first hear the Gospel? Please raise your hand.

17 List count how many of you first heard the Gospel at...

- Before 10 years old?
- 11-15 years old?
- 16-20 years old?
- 21-29 years old?
- 30-39 years old?
- 40-49 years old?
- 50-59 years old?
- 60-69 years old?
- 70-79 years old?
- 80 years old and beyond?

18 Why did the Gospel come to us at different ages?

19 Please note this carefully. This is the reason: God is the one who decides when to call and save a person. And this call of God comes to us through the message of the Gospel of Christ.

20 Whenever and wherever the Gospel is proclaimed or explained, that is God calling people to salvation. The Gospel might have come to you through one individual explaining the Gospel personally to you. The Gospel might have come to you through an evangelistic meeting. Perhaps the Gospel came to you through something you read, or through something you heard on radio or something you watched on television.

21 God uses different means to bring the Gospel to people. But one thing we should always remember: Every time the Gospel is proclaimed, God is calling people through that message. And God's call is given to all, without exception. Let's read Revelation 22:17:

And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

22 Remember this! When God brought the call of the Gospel to us, we had no idea about the two previous actions of God in salvation. God did not tell us: "I already foreknew you. I already predestined you before you were born." God said nothing to us about these two actions of His when He sent the Gospel message to us.

23 The only message we heard through the Gospel is contained, for example, in John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

24 And the call of God in the Gospel was for WHOSOEVER. No discrimination, no favoritism – whoever you were, children, old people, women, men, rich, poor, educated or uneducated – whosoever believes in Christ will not perish but have everlasting life!

- ACTION 4: JUSTIFIED

25. And praise God! You believed in Christ. You believed that He died on the cross for your sins. You believed that He rose again from the dead. You repented of your sins. You received Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.

26 And a miracle happened! The moment you put your faith in Christ and received Him as Savior and Lord, in that very moment God JUSTIFIED you.

27 God forgave all your sins. He received you completely, as if you had never sinned in the past. You were born again, and you were adopted as a child of God, a member of the family of God. And you received the gift of eternal life. You were saved from hell. And you were assured that heaven is now your eternal destination.

28 After you received Christ, you began to read and study the Bible, just like we are doing now. And in your study of the Bible you discovered the wonderful truth.

29 You discovered that your salvation did not begin when you first heard the Gospel. You found out that, in fact, your salvation was planned by God before the foundation of the world!

30 One old pastor illustrated this truth as follows.

31 When you first heard the Gospel, the words that you read written at the front door of the church were these: WHOSOEVER WILL MAY COME (Revelation 22:17). And you responded and entered the door and put your faith in Christ. And once you were already inside, you looked back and these are the words that you read, written on the inside part of the door: CHOSEN BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD (Ephesians 1:4).

AT THE SECOND COMING

- ACTION 5: GLORIFIED

32 We have already studied about the four actions of God in salvation. There is one more action of God that we see in the BIG PICTURE. Let's read Romans 8:29-30 again.

²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

33 The fifth and last action of God in our salvation is to glorify us, and this will happen at the second coming of Christ. At that time, our bodies will be transformed to become like the resurrection body of Christ, which will never die anymore. And our spirit and soul will become perfect like the perfect humanity of Christ.

34 As far as we are concerned, this glorification is still in the future, up ahead, at the second coming of Christ. We are still waiting for this event to happen, because we are only able to see the SMALL PICTURE of our present situation, just like the ant in our illustration.

35 But if we carefully read Romans 8:29-30, we will discover that all the five actions of God in our salvation are considered as already in the PAST TENSE!

- 1 Foreknew
- 2 Predestined
- 3 Called
- 4 Justified
- 5 Glorified

36 Yes, we know that the first four actions of God were already accomplished in the past. But in our experience as human beings, the glorification has not yet happened. But, wonder of wonders! For God, even our glorification is already finished. For God, in His BIG PICTURE, the glorification is already in the past tense. For God, even at the beginning, the story was already finished!

37 Why? Because God is omnipotent; He is omniscient; and He is omnipresent. And for this God, whatever work He begins, He will surely bring to a victorious and successful completion. Let's read Philippians 1:6:

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

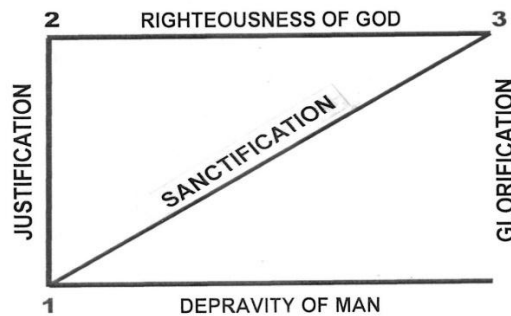
38 God is the one who began the plan of salvation in the life of every Christian, and God is the one who will surely bring this plan to completion.

SANCTIFICATION

39 In our previous lessons in this letter of Paul to the Romans, we learned that salvation consisted of three aspects:

- JUSTIFICATION
- SANCTIFICATION
- GLORIFICATION

40 Do you remember this diagram?



- JUSTIFICATION happens when we believe in and receive Christ as our Savior and Lord. This is where our Christian life begins. In justification, our sins are all forgiven; and the perfect righteousness of Christ is given to us as a gift, like a robe of righteousness, and based on Christ's perfect righteousness we are fully accepted in God's sight.

- SANCTIFICATION is a process by which the righteousness of Christ around us is progressively molded inside of us so that we become more and more like Christ. This process began when we were born again and it will find completion at the Second Coming of Christ.
- GLORIFICATION will happen at the Second Coming of Christ. Our physical body will become transformed like the resurrection body of Christ, which will no longer die; and our inner being will become fully conformed to the perfection of Christ.

41 But we ask, why is SANCTIFICATION not mentioned in the BIG PICTURE given in Romans 8:29-30? Why do we jump from JUSTIFICATION immediately to GLORIFICATION. We know in actual experience, that sanctification happens between justification and glorification.

42 Actually, even though it is not mentioned directly, sanctification is contained in the words “*predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son*”. Sanctification is something that God will surely accomplish in the life of every Christian as he/she grows in faith. JUSTIFICATION will surely result in SANCTIFICATION. In justification, the seed of the life of God is planted in the heart; and this seed will surely grow and bear fruit in SANCTIFICATION. And because God is the author of salvation, the moment He begins the work of salvation in our life, He also begins the work of transforming us into the image of His Son, and we can be sure that He will bring this transformation to completion till the end. That is the true meaning of ASSURANCE OF SALVATION!

PERSONAL APPLICATION

43 What then are some truths that we can use from this lesson on the BIG PICTURE of our salvation?

- First, we must THANK GOD for this gift of salvation which He has given to us through Christ. Salvation is by grace through faith. Not by works of righteousness which we have done but through grace alone.
- Second, we may TRUST completely the promise of God that our salvation is sure and will not be lost. Let’s remember the promise of Christ in John 10:28-29:

²⁸ And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.

- Third, we must PROVE that we are truly saved through a life that is progressively and continually being molded and changed into the image of Christ. Let's read 1 John 3:3:

And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

44 Remember: We are PREDESTINED to become like Christ. God is the potter; we are the clay. God is molding us to become like Christ. If we say that God is molding us, then there are things we must do in order for the molding process to happen in our lives. Let's read 1 Peter 2:1-5.

*Therefore, **laying aside** all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ² as newborn babes, **desire** the pure milk of the word, that you may grow^l thereby, ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.⁴ **Coming to Him** as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are **being built up** a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

45 Note those emphasized words: **laying aside, desire, coming to Him, being built up.**

- There are things we need to **lay aside** from our lives. Have you laid aside, removed, these things from your life – *all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking*?
- We must **desire**, strongly hunger for, the spiritual milk of God's Word. Do you have regular intake of God's Word through these means – hearing, reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on God's Word?
- We must **come**, continually draw near, stay connected to Christ. According to John 15:5, we need to abide in Christ as the branch abides in the Vine. Included in this is the habit of daily devotional time of Bible reading and prayer.
- And we must be **built up**, incorporated as living stones into the temple of God, the church, in which we are called to serve as priests to continually offer worship and praise and prayers to God. Included in this is DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING, being built up as disciples. Are you growing as a disciple? As in the school, you begin at kindergarten, then go on to Grades 1-6, to high school, then to college. We too are in the school of Christ. We are following the NewLife Discipleship Training, from Books 1 to 12. At what book are you now?
- Fourth, we must MAINTAIN at all times the Holy Spirit-filled Life. Yes, we need to do our part; but we can do all these only through the help of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must always ask to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

AM I PREDESTINED?

46 But maybe, someone is asking: How do I know that I am predestined? Let me say this to you: Since God has brought you to this place where you have the opportunity to hear the Gospel, that is a first proof that you are predestined. Heed God's call to you today in John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

47 God says to you: WHOSOEVER WILL MAY COME. Are you ready to believe in Christ right now? Are you ready to receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord?

48 And to those of you who have already received Christ but who feel you are not walking close to Him as you should, are you ready to recommit your life, concerning the four things we learned from 1 Peter 2:1-5 in order to be conformed to the image of Christ?

MEMORIZE:

Romans 8:29-30: ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. Romans 8:29-30

LESSON 17:

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD?

1 A man went to the bank to cash a check. The teller asked for his ID. The teller compared the name and signature on the check with that on the ID. Then the teller said, "The signatures on the check and the ID do not match. Sorry, sir, we cannot cash your check."

2 God gave many promises in the Bible about blessings He would give. Every promise is like a check. We may bring every promise like a check to the Bank of Heaven in order to claim the blessing promised. But, as with a check on earth, we must make sure that the name and signature on the check are correct. God has given promises with conditions attached to them. There are also promises which pertain only to people who have the necessary qualifications.

ROMANS 8:28 PROMISE

3 For example, almost every one, if not every one, believe that the promise of Romans 8:28 belongs to them:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

4 Let me ask you: Do you think that the promise of Romans 8:28 may be claimed by anyone without any condition? Can we tell just anybody, “Don’t worry, God will use what happens to you for your good?”

5 You will probably answer, “Yes”.

6 But if we examine the verse closely, this promise pertains only to a specific group of people, who fulfill two qualifications. You will not miss these two qualifications at all. It’s written out clearly. What are these two qualifications?

- First, this promise is guaranteed only to **THOSE WHO LOVE GOD**.
- Second, this promise is guaranteed only to **THOSE WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO GOD’S PURPOSE**.

7 Therefore, if you do not love God, Romans 8:28 does not apply to you. If you are not sure that you are called according to God’s purpose, Romans 8:28 is not for you.

8 If you bring the check of Romans 8:28 to the Bank of Heaven, you’ll be rejected. I know, many Christians who just heard what I have said will be offended. But I am only clarifying the condition which is clearly stated in the verse itself. Let’s read the verse carefully again:

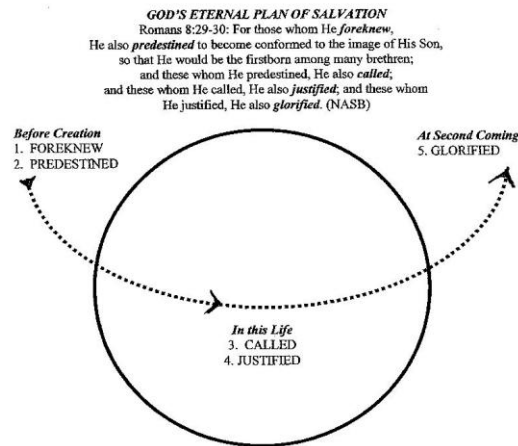
*And we know that all things work together for good **TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD**, to those **WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE**.*

9 Let’s study carefully the two conditions or qualifications. Let’s look at the second one first.

CONDITION 1: CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.

10 The promise of Romans 8:28 applies only to those who are called according to God’s purpose. We will understand this condition if we go back to the diagram we used to explain Romans 8:29, 30:

29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.



11 According to Romans 8:29, 30, what was the purpose which motivated God's call for us? His purpose was to make us to be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ.

12 God is the Potter, we are the handful of clay which He grabbed from the earth. When He grabbed us, He separated us for Himself from the mass of earth which remained. He then took us to His potter's house. And inside His potter's house, He began to mold us to become like His Son. In the process of His molding, He used a lot of actions. He mixed the clay, He pounded the clay, He rotated the clay, He smoothed the clay, and He did many other actions. In the end, after the clay was molded into the shape He desired, He then put the clay inside a hot furnace in order to bake it.

13 The important truth we need to remember is this: Every action which the Potter does has a good reason behind it, and all the actions all work together for good in order to bring out the final shape which the Potter had in His mind.

14 This is the truth which Romans 8:28 teaches. For the Christian who is called according to God's purpose to become conformed to the image of Christ, all events, circumstances, and experiences which God allows to enter into the life of a Christian – these will all work together for good. And what is this good? The good of becoming more and more like Christ.

WHAT IT DOES NOT MEAN

15 The good of the Christian does not mean that he will not experience pain or sorrow. Keep in mind the illustration of the clay as it is being molded by the Potter. Does the clay feel comfortable when it is being mixed or pounded or rotated? Is the clay happy when it is put into the hot oven? If the clay were a person with conscious feelings, we know that it will experience pain and discomfort and sorrow, and probably it will cry out, "Lord, why are you punishing me? Why do you allow me to suffer the intense fire of this oven?"

16 And if we are the potter, what shall we say to the clay while it is suffering inside the oven? We will say, "Your suffering in the fire is for your good." And what will the clay reply? It will say, "I do not understand how this intense suffering is for my good. Please, take me out of the oven now!"

17 And no matter how much the clay will cry out for mercy, will we take it out of the oven? Of course not. We will leave the clay inside the oven until the right time when it is properly baked. And at the exact moment, we will take out the clay and release it from its suffering, only after it has achieved the form that we have intended for it.

18 That is what God is doing with us. As Christians, God called us to become transformed into the image of Christ. In the process of molding us, He will use different kinds of trials as instruments in shaping us. And because God is all-power and He is all-wise, He will make sure that every trial that comes to us will be good, because it will help in making us more like Christ.

19 Have you heard this saying, "God is not interested in our happiness but in our holiness"?

20 What does this saying mean? We humans often seek only what will make us happy and comfortable. But for God, it is more important to Him that we grow in our holiness. And if necessary, He will temporarily withhold happiness from us in order to train us in holiness.

21 The importance and purpose of trials are explained in James 1:2-4:

² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be ^[b]perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

22 1 Peter 1:6, 7 teaches the same thing:

⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been ^[c]grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

23 The apostle Peter used the illustration of purifying gold. Do you know how gold is obtained so that it will become used for jewelry? First, it must be mined from the earth. The gold from the mine is mixed in rock and dirt. For the gold to be separated, the rock and dirt must be crushed. Then it must be purified through water and then through fire. The fire is heated to very high temperatures. The more pure gold you want, the higher the temperature.

24 But do you know that no matter how intense the process is, the highest quality of gold bears this mark: 99.99% pure gold. Why? Because in this world, humans cannot guarantee 100% pure gold.

25 But according to the apostle Peter, our faith is more precious than gold. God's purpose is to make our faith 100% pure gold. In order to purify our faith, God will put us through the intense fire of trials. And at the Second Coming of Christ, God will display us to the whole universe as 100% pure gold. And according to Romans 8:28, all the trials will be used by God to work together for good in order to make us perfect like Christ.

CONDITION 2: THOSE WHO LOVE GOD

26 If we wish to claim the promise of Romans 8:28, there is a second condition: LOVE GOD. Let's read Romans 8:28 again:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

27 We already discussed one condition: CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. Now, we will discuss the other condition: THOSE WHO LOVE GOD.

28 What does it mean to love God? According to the Lord Jesus, this is the greatest commandment. Let's read Matthew 22:37, 38:

³⁷ Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.

29 In the Old Testament, the psalmist learned what it meant to love God. Let's read Psalm 73:25, 26:

*²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but You?
And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.*

*26 My flesh and my heart fail;
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

30 For the person who loves God, what is most important in heaven? God. And what is most important on earth? God. And what is more important than life and physical comforts? God alone.

31 In the Old Testament, the person Job demonstrated what love of God truly meant. One day, a series of misfortunes came to his life: his wealth, his possessions, even his children, all were taken away from him. But what was his response to all this tragedy? Let's read Job 1:21, 22:

*21 And he said:
"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
And naked shall I return there.
The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;
Blessed be the name of the LORD."
22 In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.*

32 Do you have that kind of love for God?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

33 Are you going through tremendous trials at present? Are you tempted to question, to doubt, and to blame or be angry at God?

34 Compared to Job, what do we say in our hearts when we encounter trials in life?

- Some of us ask, WHY, LORD?
- Some of us doubt, LORD, DO YOU REALLY LOVE ME?
- A few of us may feel angry: IF THIS IS HOW GOD TREATS ME, I DON'T WANT TO BE A CHRISTIAN ANYMORE.

35 Before we claim Romans 8:28, let us make sure of our relationship with God. Are we sure we are genuine Christians? Are we sure that we have been called according to God's purpose? Do we really love God more than anything or anyone else in this world, and more than life itself?

36 If so, then we possess the two conditions that qualify us to claim God's promise in Romans 8:28. In order to claim the blessing promised by Romans 8:28, there are four things we need to do:

1. First, we must humble ourselves and submit to God's will. Let's follow the example of the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, when facing the cross, He prayed as follows, in Matthew 26:39:

He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

2. Second, we must worship and thank God in every situation, no matter what happens. Let's read 1 Thessalonians 5:18:

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Also, Ephesians 5:20:

Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Third, we must claim the power that God gives in order to overcome trials. Let's read 2 Corinthians 12:8, 9:

⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

4. Fourth, we must have full faith and confidence that God will surely make all things to work together for our good and for the glory of His name. For this reason, Romans 8:28 will surely become fulfilled in our lives.

And we know that all things work together for good TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, to those WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.

FOR NON-CHRISTIANS

37 If Romans 8:28 is only for Christians, what promise can we share with non-Christians?

38 There is one promise that the Lord Jesus gives in Matthew 11:28 which we can share with non-Christians:

Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

39 Let's share Matthew 11:28 to non-Christian friends who are going through difficult times and facing problems in life. Together with this, let's explain to them how they may come to the Lord Jesus through the Gospel. With Matthew 11:28 let us share John 3:16:

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

MEMORIZE:

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

LESSON 18:

GOD'S PLAN FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL

1 Have you noticed in the news about how Arab Muslim nations are always threatening to destroy the nation of Israel? Why do Arab nations hate Israel so much? Does God have a plan for the nation of Israel? What is the relationship of Israel to Christ? What is the relationship of Israel to Christians?

2 These questions are answered in these three chapters of Romans 9, 10, 11.

GOD HAS A PLAN

3 These three chapters (Romans 9-11) are full of mysterious truths. No Bible teacher or theologian is able to explain fully these mysterious truths. But we may have some understanding if we know something of God's plan for Israel.

4 God's plan is laid out by the apostle Paul in Romans 11:25-29:

²⁵ For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own ^[f]opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be ^[g]saved, as it is written:

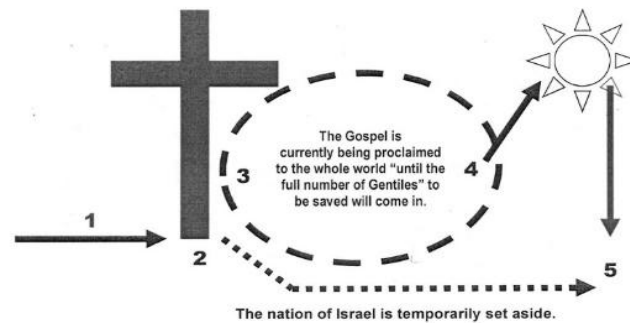
*"The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;*

²⁷ For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.”

²⁸ Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

6 Let's use a diagram to show God's plan for Israel in relation to the whole world.

7



- (1) From Abraham, God chose Israel as His instrument for bringing Christ into the world.
- (2) However, when Christ came, Israel did not recognize Him as their Messiah; instead they rejected Him and nailed Him to the cross. Because of their rejection, God temporarily set aside Israel. This is the “hardening on a part of Israel” mentioned by Paul in Romans 11:25. This hardening will continue until the second coming of Christ.
- (3) While Israel was set aside, God turned to the Gentiles. Christ gave the Great Commission to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world, to all nations, tribe and tongue. This Gospel proclamation will end the moment “the fullness of the Gentiles comes in” (Romans 11:25). In other words, in God’s plan there is an exact number of Gentiles that He would save.
- (4) Once the full number of Gentiles to be saved has come in, the second coming of Christ will happen. At the second coming, all Christians will be taken from the world, in an event called RAPTURE (according to the pre-tribulation millennial view).
- (5) In the meantime the nation of Israel will be left on earth, and the Antichrist will seek to annihilate them. At the critical moment when Israel is cornered such that they have no hope of escape, then at that moment Christ will reveal Himself from heaven as their Messiah, who will save them; this is referred to by Paul in Romans 11:26, 27. This is the second aspect of the second coming called REVELATION (according to the pre-tribulation millennial view). Christ will come down from heaven together with those who had been taken at the RAPTURE. Upon coming down to earth, Christ will establish

His kingdom on earth for 1000 years (MILLENNIUM), during which duration of time Satan will be bound. After 1000 years have passed, Satan will be released for a short time when he will be allowed to deceive the nations for one least time and lead them into one final revolt against God. But God will destroy Satan and his army; then Satan will be cast forever into the lake of fire. The Last Judgment will be held, after which God will make all things new and usher in the New Heaven and New Earth, where God will reign forever together with His redeemed children forever and ever.

6 Two questions we need to answer:

QUESTION 1: When will the “fullness of the Gentiles to be saved” come in?

QUESTION 2: When will God resume His plan for Israel in order to save them?

THE FULL NUMBER OF GENTILES

7 Let’s answer Question 1: When will the “fullness of the Gentiles to be saved” come in?

8 Only God knows when. But there are signs that give a hint that that number is nearing completion.

9. In order for the full number of Gentiles to be saved to be completed, the Gospel must be preached to the whole world, to every tribe and tongue. Matthew 24:14 says:

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

10 Our question is this: Is there now a possibility for the Gospel to be preached to all nations, tribes and tongues, including in so-called countries which are closed to missionaries and missions? The answer is: YES.

11 How is this possible? Through modern means of the technology of communication – radio, television, and internet. Because of modern technology, the message of the Gospel is now able to reach to all corners of the world, including in closed countries.

12 God will surely use modern technology so that all nations and tribes and tongues will hear the Gospel. God alone knows when the last Gentile to be saved will receive Christ. But of one thing we are certain: that full number is already close to being completed.

13 But there is one personal question that is most important for you to answer: Friend, do you know if you are among the number of Gentiles to be saved?

14 Perhaps you will answer, “How can I be sure that I am included in that number that God will save?”

15 Friend, I have good news for you. The fact that you are now hearing God’s Word, that is a proof that God is giving you the opportunity to receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord in order for you to be included in the number of people to be saved!

16 Do you understand what I’m saying to you? God has brought you to this time and situation in which you are now hearing the message of the Gospel contained in John 3:16 FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS OWN BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.

17 Friend, God loves you. Christ died for your sins. He rose again from the dead; Christ is alive right now, and He is knocking at the door of your heart. And Christ is saying to you right now: BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK. IF ANYONE HEARS MY VOICE AND OPENS THE DOOR, I WILL COME INTO HIM.

18 Friend, do you want to be included in the number of those that God will save? You can be sure to be part of that number. All you have to do right now is to open your heart and receive Christ into your heart.

19 Pray this prayer:

Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner. I repent of all the sins I have done against You and against people. I believe that You died on the cross in order to pay for my sins. I believe that You rose again from the dead. I believe that You are alive now, and you are knocking at the door of my heart. Lord Jesus, I open my heart to You, and I receive You as my Savior and Lord. Forgive of all my sins, and I ask You to include me in the number of those that You will save. Amen.

RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

20 Now, let’s answer the question: When will God resume His plan to save Israel?

21 The answer is: THE TIME IS VERY NEAR!

22 Why do we know that God’s time to restore Israel is near? The reason is because the people of Israel, the Jews, are more and more being persecuted around the world, and they are slowly

being cornered until the whole world will be against them when they will have no way of escape. At their most desperate situation, the Messiah will come to save them.

23 Observe what's happening all over the world. It seems that more and more nations are siding with Arabs against the nation of Israel.

24 The time will come, according to the Bible, that the WHOLE WORLD will unite to fight against Israel. This is the prophecy in Zechariah 12:1-3:

The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: ² "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. ³ And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.

25 Please note what the prophet Zechariah said: ALL NATIONS OF THE EARTH WILL BE GATHERED AGAINST JERUSALEM. A time will come when not even one nation will remain as a friend or ally of Israel. This includes America, which will be forced eventually to go against Israel.

26 We have not yet reached that time. But if we analyze what's happening now, we will notice that the opposition of the nations against Israel seems to be getting worse and worse. Under the administration of President Biden the support of America for Israel seemed to have diminished. Thank God, with the administration of President Trump God has given Israel a new chance. However, we know that the prophecy about the global hatred against Israel will surely be fulfilled in the last days.

27 This means that we are going in that direction toward that time when all the world will be gathered to fight against Israel.

28 Let's note this carefully: While the full number of Gentiles to be saved is nearing completion, the global hatred against Israel will also grow worse and worse.

29 These two events are related to one another. While God's program for the Gentiles is getting completed, God's program for Israel will also begin to accelerate.

30 And what will happen at that time when all the world will surround Israel. Let's continue reading the prophecy of Zechariah 12:8-10:

⁸ *In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them. ⁹ It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

¹⁰ *“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.*

31 On that day, when the nation of Israel is cornered without any way of escape, the Lord Himself will come in order to save them. And whom will the Jews see as the Person who will save them? ***Then they will look on Me whom they pierced.*** They will see that the Person who has come to save them is none other than the one with the wound scars on His hands and side. And who is He? He is no other than the Christ whom they had rejected long ago, the one they had crucified on the cross. But now that they were cornered with no possibility of escape, who will come to save them but this same Jesus with the nail prints on His hands and the spear wound on His side!

32 It is no wonder then that the whole nation of Israel will go into loud and bitter lamentation and mourning, because they will realize at last that the Person they have rejected for all these long centuries is that same Jesus, their real Messiah who now comes to save them from sure annihilation!

CLOSING CHALLENGE

33 These two programs, one for the Gentiles and one for Israel, are the signs of the end.

- THE GOSPEL IS BEING PROCLAIMED TO THE WHOLE WORLD.
- THE WORSENING HATRED OF THE WORLD AGAINST ISRAEL.

34 It is clear that we are seeing the near fulfillment of these two signs. The spread of the Gospel is getting faster and faster now to the whole world. At the same time, the hatred of the world toward Israel is getting more and more intense. This is what the apostle Paul meant in Romans 11:25, 26:

²⁵ *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own ^[f]opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be ^[g]saved, as it is written:*

*“The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*

35 Therefore, what is the challenge of our lesson for us?

Let us make sure we are counted in the number of those who going to be saved, and that we are ready for the Second Coming of Christ.

- First, if we are sure of our salvation, let us join the GREAT COMMISSION ARMY OF CHRIST, and let us help in the proclamation of the Gospel to the whole world. Who knows, you might be used by the Lord to bring that last person who will complete the full number of Gentiles to be saved?
- Second, if you are not yet sure that you are included among those who will be saved, now is your chance to receive Christ as your Savior and Lord.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 11:25: ²⁵ For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. Romans 11:25

LESSON 19:

OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S MERCIES

1 What a great blessing from God that He has brought us to another year. A whole year awaits ahead of us. How are we to spend our lives this year? Romans 12:1 gives us reminders how we may spend this year. Let's read the verse:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

THE MERCIES OF GOD

2 A new year always gives us an opportunity to remember the mercies of God.

3 What are the mercies of God? Included in the mercies of God are the following:

- The blessings we received last year;

- The deliverances from God that we experienced from dangers which threatened us last year;
- The spiritual restoration we received during those times when we were tempted and led astray. Who of us did not suffer such times of intense temptations and trials, which caused us to sin, to grow cold spiritually, to forget and to get sidetracked? But God was so rich in mercy that He continuously called us back through the Holy Spirit and caused us to return to Him.

4 Let us take a moment to ponder the mercies of God in our lives. And let us take a moment to look up and give thanks to the Lord.

5 But now let's study and meditate on the deeper and wider meaning of the mercies of God referred to by the apostle Paul in Romans 12:1. Included in the mercies of God are all the spiritual blessings discussed by Paul from Romans 1 to Romans 11.

6 Included in these great mercies of God are the following:

- The Gospel of salvation (Romans 1:16, 17);
- Christ's redemption for us 1 (Romans 3:24-25);
- Justification and all its blessings (Romans 5);
- Sanctification (Romans 6);
- The ministry of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-28);
- The life that's more than a conqueror's (Romans 8:29-39).
- God's choice and election of us (Romans 9-11).

GOD'S ELECTION

7 I encourage you to study and meditate on GOD'S ELECTION OF US.

8 God's sovereign election of God is a big topic which the apostle Paul discusses in Romans 9-11. This sovereign choice of God is clearly proven and demonstrated in the history of the nation of Israel.

- The history of Israel began with God's choice of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3);
- God's choice was confirmed in God's choice of Isaac instead of Ishmael (Rom 9:7-9);
- God's choice was even more clearly demonstrated in the choice of Jacob instead of Esau (Rom 9:10-12). About this choice let's remember the following truths: (1) The eldest is usually chosen as the heir; Esau was the eldest, but God chose the younger one Jacob (2) Esau and Jacob were still in their mother's womb when God made the choice; therefore, it was clear that God's choice was based not on the merits or demerits of either sons, because being not yet born they still had done nothing, good or bad, when God made the choice. God's choice was based solely on God's free and sovereign will;
- In the case of Moses and Pharaoh, God made clear that God chose Pharaoh to be His instrument in order to bring glory to Him, in spite of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart (Rom 9:15-18);
- And during the time of the prophet Elijah, when he thought that he was the only one that remained faithful to God, God told him, "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." (Romans 11:2-4);
- In the life of the apostle Paul himself. It is true that the majority of the nation of Israel rejected Christ, but God chose a "remnant" from the nation of Israel who were chosen to be saved by grace (Romans 11:5-6). Included in that chosen remnant was the apostle Paul, as well as the first disciples of the Lord and the first believers among the Jews.

9 God's election is summarized in two statements:

- Romans 9:16: *So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.*
- Romans 11:6: *And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.*

10 God's sovereign election is not dependent on the desire or effort of people; it depends solely on the mercy of God.

11 Nor does it depend on human works. God's election is based exclusively on the grace of God. This is the reason why salvation is by grace alone, and never on the good works of people.

12 God's sovereign election is clarified as well by the Lord Jesus to the disciples in John 15:16:

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

13 The disciples might have thought they were the ones who chose Christ; they might have thought that they made the decision to follow Christ. In fact, the opposite was the case. Christ was the one who chose them!

14 Does this mean that the disciples were like robots? Were they merely puppets with no power to decide or to choose? Don't we read in Matthew 4:20, "They immediately left *their* nets and followed Him"?

15 Yes, they decided to leave their nets; yes, they decided to follow Jesus.

16 But before they could make that decision, what happened before that, according to Matthew 4:18,19? Let's read the passage:

¹⁸ And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

17 Did you notice it? Jesus CALLED them first! And after they heard the call of Jesus, that's when they responded and made the decision to follow Jesus. Therefore, the call came first, and only then, secondly, came their decision to follow.

GOD'S CALL

18 This is the great mercy of God to us. Like the disciples, we have been chosen by God. And because God chose us, He called us. The call of the Gospel came to us. One day we heard about Christ. Perhaps it was at an evangelistic meeting. Perhaps it was at a Bible study. Perhaps the first message of the Gospel came to us through the testimony of a friend who explained to us the Gospel.

19 Whenever the Gospel is proclaimed, whether to a group or to an individual, God's call comes to everyone who hears the Gospel.

20 Do you remember when you first heard the Gospel?

21 That was God's great mercy to you. Just think of this: What if, until now, you haven't heard the Gospel? Where do you think you'd be now?

22 Think of this: Of all the millions of people in the Philippines, of all the billions of people in the world, why is it that God chose you to hear His call of the Gospel?

23 In 2026 the projected population of the Philippines would be around 117.7 million.

24 The world population in 2026 is projected to reach 8.3 billion.

25 Imagine this: Of the 117.7 million people in the Philippines, and of the 8.3 billion people of the world, God chose you and called you through the Gospel! And when you heard the Gospel, you decided to receive Christ as your Savior and Lord. And now that Christ is in you, you now have the assurance that you will go to heaven after this life.

26 Isn't this a GREAT MERCY OF GOD? This is one of the blessings that we should remember, according to Romans 12:1.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

27 We have received so many blessings in the year 2024. But the blessing that's most important of all in our life is this: GOD CHOSE US TO BECOME HIS CHILDREN.

28 However, there might be someone here who is not sure if he/she is among those chosen by God. You might be asking: HOW DO I KNOW THAT GOD CHOSE ME?

29 My friend, I have good news for you.

30 The fact that you attended this meeting today is a clear proof that God has chosen you, because God is giving you the chance to hear the Gospel right now. The fact that you are hearing me right now, that is a proof that God is calling you. Because right now I am telling you about God's call found in John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

31 Yes, my friend, this is the good news of the Gospel.

- FIRST, God loves you.

- SECOND, God gave His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross to pay for your sins. On the cross, Christ carried your sin and paid for your sins through His death. Sin is a debt you owe to God. You have no way to pay that debt. But Christ paid for your debt of sin by His death on the cross.
- THIRD, Christ did not remain dead. He rose again, He is alive today, and He is knocking at the door of your heart. Listen to His words: *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20).*
- FOURTH, you have the opportunity to decide right now. Where do you want Christ, inside your heart or outside? If you wish Christ to come into your heart, you may pray this prayer:

Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner, and I committed a lot of sins that I must pay for to God. There is no way for me to pay for my sins. But I thank You for dying on the cross to pay for my sins; I believe that You rose again from the dead; and now you are knocking at the door of my heart. Lord Jesus, I open my heart to you, and I receive you as my Savior and Lord. Forgive me of all my sins, and help me from now on to follow you for the rest of my life. Amen.

32 Friend, if you sincerely pray that from your heart, God promises to forgive your sins and Christ will come into your heart, and you will be assured that you belong to the number of those chosen by God.

33 Now, let’s go back to our text in Romans 12:1:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

34 Because of the mercies and blessings of God, because of His call and choice of us, what then should be our response to God. The challenge of Romans 12:1 is very clear:

35 WE NEED TO OFFER OUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE TO GOD. In this verse, the BODY symbolizes the entirety of our life, the entirety of our personality and our being. In other words, we must offer to God OUR WHOLE SELF TOTALLY to God, our body, soul and spirit, our mind, emotion and will, and all our talents and abilities, all our time and possessions.

36 The picture that the apostle Paul had in mind was the altar of sacrifice in the Old Testament. We remember that in ancient times, the Israelites went to the temple to offer their sacrifices of animals, sheep or bulls or goats. They would place the animal on top of the altar, they would cut the neck of the animal and pour out its blood. The animal was offered to God for His use alone and no one else's. And because the animal was killed, it would no longer be used by anyone else for any other purpose.

37 But in the New Testament, in our present time, God is calling us to offer not a dead animal sacrifice, but rather a LIVING SACRIFICE – our body and life, which we are to dedicate to God's service.

38 There is only one problem. One pastor said, "The problem with a living sacrifice is that it has the tendency to crawl off the altar." That is the problem of many Christians. One day they promise, "God, from now on I will serve you." But the next day they will say, "Sorry, Lord, not today; I'll serve You some other day."

39 That's why the apostle Paul challenges us:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

(1) First, the moment we offer ourselves to God, we must never take back our offering again.

(2) Second, our offering should be holy. This means, our offering is "dedicated and set apart for God". With the Holy Spirit's help, we should be separate from all sin and all uncleanness of life.

(3) Third, we should use our offering in the service of God. In our next lesson we shall discuss practical ways to serve God. For this time, it is important for us to be clear about the meaning of this popular motto: SAVED TO SERVE.

40 We have been saved in order to serve. God chose and called us in order to serve in His great plan. Christ became our Savior in order that we will serve Him as our Lord.

41 Are you sure you have been saved by Christ?

42 Therefore, we challenge you today, based on Romans 12:1, to offer yourself and your whole life in order to serve God. Meditate on the words of this hymn, TAKE MY LIFE AND LET IT BE, and use the words to express your commitment to offer yourself beginning today as a living sacrifice to God.

TAKE MY LIFE AND LET IT BE

By Frances Ridley Havergal

1 Take my life and let it be
consecrated, Lord, to thee.
Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in endless praise,
let them flow in endless praise.

2 Take my hands and let them move
at the impulse of thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
swift and beautiful for thee,
swift and beautiful for thee.

3 Take my voice and let me sing
always, only, for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
filled with messages from thee,
filled with messages from thee.

4 Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
every power as thou shalt choose,
every power as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my will and make it thine;
it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne,
it shall be thy royal throne.

6 Take my love; my Lord, I pour
at thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself, and I will be

ever, only, all for thee,
ever, only, all for thee.

MEMORIZE:

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

LESSON 20:

3 STEPS TO SERVING GOD

1 In our previous lesson we learned from Romans 12:1 our proper response to God.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 What is our proper response to God's mercies – what is our acceptable return to all God's mercies and blessings?

3 In truth, we are not able to pay back God for His mercies. The only thing we can do is to thank Him. As an evidence of our thanksgiving, God gives us the privilege of serving Him. According to Romans 12:1, service begins with offering our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. The body represents all of our life – body, soul and spirit, mind, emotion, will, our personality and our whole being, our talents and abilities including all that we possess.

4 This offering of our lives is our reasonable service. But what is the meaning of service? What are some of the sure and practical ways that we need to do in order to serve God truly?

DIFFERENT AREAS OF SERVICE

5 In Romans 12 to 16 the apostle Paul explains the different areas and situation in which we may serve God.

6 In Romans 12, three areas of service are mentioned:

- In our personal life (Romans 12:2);
- Inside the church (Romans 12:3-16);

- Outside the church (Romans 12:17-21).

7 In the remaining chapters of Romans we see other areas of service:

- In our relationship to the government (Romans 13:1-7);
- In our relationship to society (Romans 14:8-14);
- In our relationship to people who hold different views (Romans 14:1-15:6);
- In our relationship to the Great Commission (Romans 15:7-33);
- In our relationship to friends (Roma 16).

8 We will notice that our service to God involves all of life. In succeeding lessons we will discuss one by one all these areas of service which we have mentioned.

IN PERSONAL LIFE

9 But where do we begin to serve? Of course, we begin with our personal life. As the saying goes, “Charity begins at home.”

10 We must first take care of our life and our home before we can effectively serve outside.

11 Romans 12:2 tells us how we need to fix our personal lives:

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

12 We discover three steps from Romans 12:2:

- STEP 1: DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD.
- STEP 2: BE RENEWED IN YOUR MIND.
- STEP 3: KNOW AND DO GOD’S WILL.

STEP 1: DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD.

13 J. B. Phillips has an enlightening paraphrase of Romans 12:2:

Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the Plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.

14 Indeed, the world outside exerts a very powerful influence upon us. It is as if the world is squeezing us into its mold and form of life. What evidence do we see that world is squeezing us in order to make us conform to it?

15 One very clear evidence of this worldly influence is in our fashion and dress. Why are people, specially the youth, pressured into shopping? To go along with the current fashion. If you tell them, "Your dress from last year is still ok, why buy new ones?"

16 They will answer, "It's not cool to wear those anymore. They're out of fashion."

17 Not only the youth, this includes older folks as well... the pressure of the world's fashion is so strong on them.

18 In America, this used to be described as "Keeping us with the Joneses."

19 This thinking goes this way: You have that; I also have it.

20 In the Philippines, our culture is based on HIYA (SHAME) or "losing face": "Don't embarrass yourself; what will other people say?"

21 Not only is this problem with Filipinos. This was a problem with the Jews during the time of the Lord Jesus. They, too, felt the pressure of the world pressing upon them.

22 Let's read what Jesus said about people in John 5:44:

How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?

23 That was the root problem of the Jews; that's still our root problem today: Which is more important to us, the praise of people, or the approval of God?

24 In the past year, do you remember how many times and situations were you prevented from serving God because of your fear of what people might say?

25 This year, are you ready to make this firm commitment: LORD, FROM NOW ON I WILL ONLY SEEK YOUR APPROVAL, AND I WILL NO LONGER BE AFRAID OF WHAT PEOPLE MIGHT SAY ABOUT ME.

26 The challenge this year for us is found in Romans 12:2:

Don't let the world from the outside squeeze you into its mold.

27 In order to serve God well and effectively, we must take this first step: DON'T BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD.

STEP 2: BE RENEWED IN YOUR MIND

28 And what is the second step? BE RENEWED IN YOUR MIND.

29 Again, in the paraphrase of J. B. Phillips:

Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the Plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.

30 LET GOD RE-MOLD YOUR MINDS FROM WITHIN.

31 This renewing of the mind is absolutely important.

32 As long as our minds remain unrenewed, we will not be able to serve God rightly. AN UNRENEWED MIND CANNOT SERVE GOD!

33 For example, let's read Ephesians 4:22-24:

²² that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³ and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

34 Please, note the step-by-step renewal process:

- Take off (like dirty clothes) your old man (the old sinful way of life);
- Be renewed in your mind;

- Put on (like new clean clothes) your new man (the new life in Christ).

35 Did you notice it? Between the putting off of the old man and the putting on of the new man, in the middle is the important step of BE RENEWED IN YOUR MIND.

36 That is the same process taught in Romans 12:2:

- STEP 1: DON'T BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD;
- STEP 2: BE RENEWED IN YOUR MIND;
- STEP 3: KNOW AND DO THE WILL OF GOD.

HOW TO RENEW YOUR MIND

37 The question now is this: HOW DO WE RENEW OUR MINDS?

Let's read J. B. Phillips again on Romans 12:2:

Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the Plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.

38 Please note the following facts:

39 First, God alone, not we, can renew our minds. It is only through the Holy Spirit that we can have the power to erase the old ways of thinking and develop new habits of godly thinking.

40 Scientists say that the brain is like a computer, which stores information. And they have a saying about computers: GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT.

41 This means, the computer will only give out the information which you previously put into it.

42 And in this regard, Christ was way ahead. Long before computers, Jesus said in Matthew 12:34:

Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

43 Secondly, this is the secret to renewing the computer of our minds. The Holy Spirit will renew our minds through two powerful forces: God's Word and prayer.

(a) GOD'S WORD

We must continually fill our minds with the Word of God. Even in the Old Testament, this principle was already known and practiced by believers.

Psalm 119:9-11:

⁹ How can a young man cleanse his way?

By taking heed according to Your word.

¹⁰ With my whole heart I have sought You;

Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!

¹¹ Your word I have hidden in my heart,

That I might not sin against You.

If we want to serve God, we must fill our hearts and minds with the Word of God. And how do we put God's Word in our minds and hearts? Through SCRIPTURE MEMORY.

Can we do this? Are we able to memorize God's Word? Let's make this a project in our cell group this year. Let's set this as a goal:

MEMORIZE ONE VERSE A WEEK.

(b) PRAYER

This is the second powerful force which the Holy Spirit uses to renew our minds: PRAYER.

Many find it difficult to pray.

The reason is that they don't understand the simple meaning of prayer.

- PRAYER IS CONVERSING WITH GOD.
- Prayer is a child calling out to his/her Father.
- Prayer is fellowship with God every moment, whatever the situation.
- Prayer is living in the presence of God continually.

44 Prayer is removing the old rebellious attitude. This was the rebellious attitude of Adam and Eve when they ate the forbidden fruit: THEIR EYES WERE OPENED, AND THEY KNEW GOOD AND EVIL.

45 This meant that they had become independent of God; they thought that they were capable of deciding for themselves what was good and bad. They thought they no longer needed to consult with God or to ask for His help or guidance.

46 Prayer is removing such rebellious, independent spirit.

47 Instead, in prayer is having the humility that in myself I cannot do anything, that I need God's help all the time. That's why, in prayer I will continually go to God and ask for His guidance and strength to meet every circumstance and every need in my life, whether small or big.

48 We find the simplest picture of prayer in Psalm 123:1, 2:

¹ Unto You I lift up my eyes,

O You who dwell in the heavens.

² Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters,

As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress,

So our eyes look to the LORD our God,

Until He has mercy on us.

49 Prayer is continually looking up to God and continually waiting for His guidance and help.

50 This is the meaning of Hebrews 12:2: LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

51 Can we do this, this year? Are we ready to fix our eyes and our hope on the Lord Jesus?

52 If we do these two things: MEMORIZE GOD'S WORD, and ALWAYS LOOK TO THE LORD JESUS IN PRAYER, we can be sure that God will renew our minds.

STEP 3: KNOW AND DO GOD'S WILL.

53 With the help of a renewed mind, we shall be able to do the third step commanded in Romans 12:2:

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

54 This is the third step: KNOW AND DO GOD'S WILL.

55 The will of God includes those things that God want us to do everyday according to His commandments. All God's commandments were summarized by the Lord Jesus under two great commandments:

- Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.
- Love your neighbor as yourself.

56 In our next lessons we shall study more in detail concerning the will of God. We will be able to do God's will through serving God in various relationships and situations. This is what we shall discuss in Romans 12-16.

CHALLENGE

57 In conclusion, this is our challenge from Romans 12:2: SHALL WE DO THE THREE STEPS?

- STEP 1: DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, shall we commit ourselves not be pressured into following the fashions of this world?

- STEP 2: BE RENEWED IN YOUR MIND.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, shall we commit to renew our minds through memorizing God's Word and through prayer?

- STEP 3: KNOW AND DO GOD'S WILL.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, shall we commit to do God's will once He shows this clearly to us?

MEMORIZE:

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

LESSON 21:

SERVING INSIDE & OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

1 Saved to serve.

2 In that motto is found the secret to a fruitful and joyful Christian life.

3 Where and how do we serve? According to Romans 12:3-16, as Christians our first place of service is inside the church.

REMINDER

4 But first, three reminders in order for us to make sure that our service is acceptable to God and truly helpful to other Christians.

(1) REMINDER 1: Be HUMBLE (Romans 12:3).

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

5 Our service must be guided and motivated by humility. Humility means we don't exalt ourselves in comparison to our brothers and sisters whom we are serving. We must never look down on them and feel superior to them just because we are serving them.

6 However, humility doesn't mean we look down on ourselves, either. Romans 12:3 says, we must "*think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*" In the family of God, in the church, no one is superior or inferior. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. All Christians are equally sinners saved by the grace of God. And every Christian is given his/her measure of faith.

7 Humility in service means that we are all equally given an assignment to serve others and we are all equally given the privilege of receiving service from others.

8 Let read and recite together the following affirmation:

YOU AND I ARE EQUALLY SINNERS SAVED BY THE GRACE OF GOD, AND YOU AND I ARE EQUALLY IN NEED OF SERVICE FROM ONE ANOTHER.

(2) REMINDER 3: As parts of the Body of Christ we are all varied and different from one another. Romans 12:4, 5:

⁴For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

9 Christ is the Head; Christians are the varied and different parts of the Body of Christ. God is the one who decides where we are to be placed, whether in the hand or in the feet. It doesn't mean just because I am located in the hand that I am superior to someone who is located in the feet. The hand cannot go anywhere without the feet, and the feet cannot hold anything without the hand.

10 Let's recite together the following affirmation:

GOD PLACED YOU WHERE YOU ARE, AND GOD PLACED ME WHERE I AM IN ORDER THAT WE MAY SERVE ONE ANOTHER.

(3) REMINDER 3: Every Christian is given a spiritual gift or ability to serve. Romans 12:6a:

⁶Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them:

11 We do not choose which gift will be given to us; God decides that. The important thing is for us to know that every Christian in the Body of Christ has surely received a spiritual gift or an ability to serve. We must not believe Satan's lie, which he whispers in our ear, "Sorry, God did not give you a spiritual gift. You have no ability to serve in the Body of Christ at all."

12 We must emphasize this truth: EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS RECEIVED A SPIRITUAL GIFT. Therefore, every Christian must discover what gift he/she has received from God, at he/she must learn to use the gift. In fact, some Christians have been given more than one gift.

13 Let's recite together the following affirmation:

YOU HAVE A GIFT AND I HAVE A GIFT, AND WE WILL USE OUR GIFT TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER.

14 Many other spiritual gifts are mentioned in other parts of the New Testament, but in this study we will analyze the spiritual gifts listed by the apostle Paul here in Romans 12. Let's list the gifts by name, and then study what they mean.

LIST OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS:

- PROPHECY (vs. 6):
- SERVICE (vs. 7):
- TEACHING (vs. 7):
- EXHORTATION (vs. 8):
- GIVING (vs. 8):
- LEADERSHIP (vs. 8):
- MERCY (vs. 8):

15 Let's keep in mind that God gave spiritual gifts in order to meet specific needs in the church. We will understand more clearly the meaning of each gift if we understand first the need that it addresses. For example, let's examine the local church to which we belong. What needs do we have in our church?

- NEED #1: LEADERSHIP.

16 The members of our church consist of people from different backgrounds, different personalities and characteristics, different desires and goals. How can we unite these members in such a way that they will love one another and that they will have a common goal? God gave the gift of LEADERSHIP in order to guide and unite the members to have one desire and goal.

17 Do you know of someone among our members who has received the gift of LEADERSHIP?

- NEED #2: PROPHECY

18 The church is a group of believers who live by the Word of God. How would they know what particular Word of God will meet their present need or situation? God gave the gift of PROPHECY to some members for them to declare and apply the Word of God that's needed for the present situation (FORTH-TELLING/PREACHING). Sometimes, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they may declare God's Word about the future (FORE-TELLING).

WARNING!

At the present time, now that we have the complete Bible, the gift of prophecy (forth-telling) is primarily exercised through preaching and exposition and application of the message of the Bible.

However, there are some churches and Christians who believe that the gift of prophecy is the ability to give specific advice or warnings to people regarding specific matters in their life. For example, “God told me to tell you, you must do such and such” or “God told me to tell you that you must come here or go there.”

No; the gift of prophecy should be based on the Bible and on the clear teachings and principles of the scriptures, and how they apply to our lives. For example, let’s look at the specific prophecy by Agabus concerning the apostle Paul in Acts 21:10-14:

10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 When he had come to us, he took Paul’s belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’ ”

12 Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, “What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, “The will of the Lord be done.”

Note that the prophecy was NOT a command which the apostle Paul must obey. Beforehand, Paul already knew God’s will for him to go to Jerusalem. But why did Agabus give the prophecy? It was to prepare Paul more fully and encourage his heart to meet the sufferings he was sure to experience in Jerusalem.

If anyone claims to have a prophecy from the Lord for you, this is how you must answer, “Thank you, brother/sister, for your word of prophecy. But I will personally continue to pray for God to show me clearly what is His will for me.”

You must never make a decision simply based on a prophecy that’s supposed to be a prophecy which someone else received from God for you.

19 What do you think, do you sense that God has given you the gift of prophecy (the ability to understand, explain and preach the Word of God)? Do you know of a member who has this gift of FORTH-TELLING (PREACHING)?

- NEED #3: TEACHING.

20 Christians have been described as “People of the Book”. This book is the Bible, and in this book is found all the teachings needed to have a relationship with God and a relationship with people that’s pleasing to God. Every Christian must learn what’s taught in the whole Bible. But how will Christians be able to learn? God has given to some members of the church the gift of

TEACHING, in order that through their help all the other members of the church may learn all that the Bible teaches.

21 In our local church, members need to grow in their knowledge of the Bible. Who of our members have the gift of TEACHING, so that they will be able to teach the others?

- NEED #4: EXHORTATION.

22 The contents of the Bible are not only for information to be stored in our heads; the truths of the Bible need to be applied in our practical daily life. God gave the gift of EXHORTATION to some members to enable them: (1) to remind and encourage members who are discouraged and getting cold; (2) comfort and assist members who are going through trials or sufferings; (3) give warning and seek to restore members who are straying from the right path.

23 Surely in our local church we have members who are growing weak and are cooling off; some members are going through trials and sufferings; some may be straying from the right path. Who among our members have the gift of EXHORTATION, who will help such needy members?

- NEED #5: SERVICE.

24 Church members need not only the Word of God. They also need practical help in the basic necessities of life, food, clothing, shelter, at other material needs. God gave the gift of SERVICE in order to meet these practical needs of the brethren. For example, in Acts 6 there were members who were neglected in the daily distribution of food. What was the solution to this problem? The church in Jerusalem selected some men to help in the distribution of food; the men who were chose had the gift of SERVICE.

25 Here in our local church, there are some members who need material help; we need members who have the gift of SERVICE to take care of these needy persons.

- NEED #6: GIVING.

26 The local church needs financial support. The church has to meet expenses for evangelism and missions. In order to supply the financial needs of the church God gave to some members the gift of GIVING. Some of these people may be financially well off; or they may be ordinary people as well. But God has given to them a deep concern for the work of the Lord, so that they are very glad to give financially to support the church. All Christians have the duty to give to support the church. But members who have the gift of GIVING give generously more than the average members.

27 In your opinion, do we have church members who have the spiritual gift of GIVING?

- NEED #7: MERCY.

28 In the church we find not only members with the usual material needs. We also have members with long-term problems, such as those with terminal illnesses physically or psychologically. Included among these are those with physical or learning disabilities, who need continuous and long-term care.

29 Most of us probably devote some time to caring those with long-term needs. But who of us are able to continue indefinitely to care for such patients? Only Christians with the gift of MERCY are able and willing to do this.

30 The gift of MERCY is a desire and ability from the Holy Spirit to sympathize and identify with people with physical and emotional as well as spiritual needs. A Christian with the gift of MERCY will seek to give relief to those who are suffering, to give comfort and encouragement to patients with chronic or terminal illnesses.

(a) Recipients of the ministry of MERCY suffer from chronic or terminal conditions.

(b) Members with the spiritual gift of MERCY are committed to keep helping with a joyful and generous spirit those with long-term needs. Persons who don't have the gift of MERCY may help because they are obligated. But Christians with the gift of MERCY are always ready to serve with gladness and for however long it takes.

Who among our members, do you think, have the gift of MERCY?

ATTITUDES IN SERVING

31 As we have mentioned above, some may serve because they are obligated. In Romans 12:9-13-16 certain attitudes in serving are emphasized. Let's meditate on this passage.

32 Let's take note of the attitudes that we need to have, and the attitudes we need to avoid.

- *Let love be without hypocrisy.*
- *Abhor what is evil*
- *Cling to what is good*

- *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love*
- *In honor giving preference to one another*
- *Not lagging in diligence*
- *Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*
- *Rejoicing in hope*
- *Patient in tribulation*
- *Steadfastly in prayer*
- *Distributing to the needs of the saints*
- *Given to hospitality.*
- *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep*
- *Be of the same mind toward one another*
- *Do not set your mind on high things*
- *Associate with the humble*
- *Do not be wise in your own opinion.*

33 All these attitudes are proper and commendable for us to have. Let's admit that in our own strength we are not able to manifest these attitudes in our daily life. That's why, all the time, we must seek the power and help of the Holy Spirit to build these attitudes in us.

SERVING OUR ENEMIES

34 However, there is a problem with serving others. Not everybody is ready to receive help from us. Instead, they are in opposition against us. What should we do when faced with people who go against us? Let's read the practical advice given in Romans 12:14, 17-21:

¹⁴ *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*

¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil. Have^[e] regard for good things in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

CHALLENGE

35 Saved to serve.

36 We are saved in order to serve the Lord in the church by serving our brothers and sisters. We are also saved and called to serve people outside of the church.

37 Why?

38 Because we are followers of Christ, who came into the world to become God's Servant for the salvation of people. Let's read again about the example of the Lord in John 13:3-5, 12-17:

³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, ⁴ rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. ⁵ After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

¹² So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you ^[b]know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

39 Our Lord and Teacher served His disciples and all kinds of people. He left us an example for us to follow.

40 Each one of us received one or two spiritual gifts for service. Are we ready to use these gifts?

41 May I challenge us all to make a commitment to use our gifts in order to serve the Lord.

42 We may pray something like this:

LORD JESUS, YOU HAVE GIVEN ME A SPIRITUAL GIFT AND ABILITY TO SERVE. I COMMIT MYSELF TO USE MY SPIRITUAL GIFT TO SERVE YOU IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BEGINNING TODAY. AMEN.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 12:3: For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. Romans 12:3

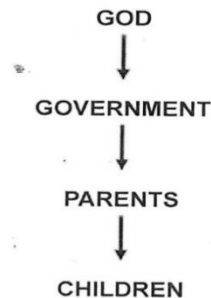
LESSON 22:

SERVING AS A CITIZEN

1 In the world – but not of the world. This is what the Lord Jesus said about His disciples (John 17:11, 16). That is the condition of Christians. Our real home is in heaven, not in this world. God keeps us in this world in order to fulfill His purpose and in order for us to serve Him.

2 This service includes being subject to the government. This is the order of authority which God has established in the world. God is the Lord over all. Under God is the government. Under the government are parents. Under the parents are the children.

- God is the sovereign Ruler over all (Daniel 4:1; Matthew 28:18).
- God established the government to maintain law and order (Romans 13:1-4).
- God installed parents over the children to nurture and guide them in God’s way (Ephesians 6:1-4).



3 God’s command is clear regarding the relationship of citizens (these include Christians) to the government.

Romans 13:1:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

4 Whether we like it or not, the government – good or bad – has been established by God. That's why there is this warning.

Romans 13:2:

² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

5 This is what we may expect from the government when it is ruling according to the plan of God.

Romans 13:3, 4:

³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

6 The government which rules according to God's plan provides protection against wicked people and helps citizens to live in a just and righteous way; it maintains peace and order in the nation.

7 When there is no government, two dangers will arise:

- DANGER 1: Anarchy will prevail, in which every person will do as he/she likes without respect or regard for others.
- DANGER 2: Might will become right; only the fittest will survive. The strong will rule; no one will protect the weak, who will remain oppressed and taken advantage of.

OBLIGATIONS OF CITIZENS

8 Therefore, citizens have obligations to support the government.

Romans 13:5-7:

⁵ Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. ⁷ Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

9 As good Christians we are to be law-abiding citizens. We must pay our taxes; we must give the honor and respect that is due to government officials.

IF THE GOVERNMENT IS BAD

10 But how about when the government is bad? We know that this happens. There are governments and officials that do not follow the plan of God, and they do wicked and corrupt things.

11 When that happens, we have many examples from the Bible, which guide us as to what we may do when governments and leaders impose laws that contradict God's laws and violate our conscience.

- The example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, when king Nebuchadnezzar made a giant image and commanded everyone to worship it.

Daniel 3:16-18:

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar; we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

12 Did you see the courage and boldness of the three young men? They did not even want to argue about their decision; they would not worship the image. They knew the risk, they would be thrown into the fiery oven. Yes, they believed their God was powerful, and that He was able to deliver them. And they believed that God would deliver them. However, in case God willed not to deliver them, they were ready to die for their faith.

13 How about you? Have you ever had that experience of standing up for your faith in God? For example, in your office, if you were invited by the boss to a birthday party, where you knew you would be forced to join in the drinking, just to please the boss. As a Christian, you knew that if you made a stand not to join in the drinking, you would be offending your boss, and you might even get fired. What would you do? Would you still not compromise, even if you might get fired? That is surely a difficult situation. But the predicament of the three young men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, was worse. Not only were they going to be fired; they were going to be fried, burned! And yet they did not hesitate to make a stand in order to remain faithful to God.

- The example of Peter and the apostles when they were commanded to stop preaching in the name of Jesus.

Acts 5:29:

29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men."

14 This should be very clear to us regarding this matter: When the laws of the government contradict the laws of God, we must choose to obey God rather than the government. However, the government still retains the power to punish, as it happened in the case of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Like them we will accept the punishment, believing that God is able to save us. But if God does not save us, we will still be ready to die if necessary to remain obedient and faithful to God.

15 Therefore, this is the advice of the apostle Peter.

1 Peter 4:16, 19:

16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

19 Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

16 Thank God that in the Philippines today, there is still freedom of religion, and the government does not persecute Christians.

17 However countries controlled by Islam or Buddhism or Hinduism and other religions similar to them, as well as countries that are still controlled by Communism, they continue to persecute Christians. And if any of us experience such persecution, we should remember the example of believers in the Bible, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and the example of the apostle Peter and the early Christians. We should make a definite and strong stand on this principle: We will obey God, rather than men.

18 Here in the Philippines, we experience a different kind of persecution, specially when we are processing papers at different government offices. All of us are aware of this problem. What's this problem? The problem of bribery. In many government offices, and even in private offices or businesses, this problem of bribery exists. Unless you give a bribe your paper or your case will not be processed.

19 This is a big problem for Christians. We know that it is a sin to bribe. But our papers or case will not be processed unless we give a bribe. What then do we do?

20 We may do the following actions:

- PRAY fervently and with strong faith. Let's ask the Lord to move in the hearts of the officials or employees who are handling our papers or cases.

- KEEP FOLLOWING-UP. Keep petitioning the official or employee who is handling our papers or case.
- SEEK HELP from a friend who is a higher official or employee to intercede for us.
- REMAIN FIRM IN YOUR PRINCIPLE to obey God rather than people. Leave everything to God, no matter what happens.

THE GREATEST LAW

21 God instituted governments to do what is right and in order to enforce laws and regulations. But we don't need a lot of laws if we follow the greatest and most effective law of all, the law of love.

Romans 13:8-10:

⁸ Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," ^[b] "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

THE TIME IS SHORT

22 In addition to love, another powerful motivation for the Christian to remain faithful to God and to do what is right and honest is this truth: that the time is short.

Romans 13:11-12a:

¹¹ And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far spent, the day is at hand.

23 The Second Coming of Christ is near. The coming of Christ may happen in two ways.

- Christ's coming may be personal and individual, at the hour of our death. None of us is guaranteed tomorrow. There is a saying, "Live as if today is the last day of your life." That is a good reminder. Let's not waste our time. Let's always strive to serve the Lord with every moment that He gives to us.
- The coming of Christ may be His coming at the end of the world. That is what everyone is waiting for. He will come down from heaven to put an end to this wicked world and to inaugurate His one thousand years reign on the earth.

24 No matter which coming of Christ happens to us, whether at death or at the end of the world, let's always remember: Very little time remains for us to serve the Lord.

25 What effect will this have if we are always watching out for the coming of Christ?

Roma 13:12b-14:

Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

PUT ON CHRIST

26 This is the secret of being a good citizen, and not only of a good citizen but of being a victorious and fruitful Christian. The secret is this: PUT ON CHRIST.

27 In order for us to be law-abiding and good citizens, we don't need a lot of laws printed on billboards around us which keep reminding us: "Do this!" or "Do that!" We don't need a lot of police officers who are always watching to see who is violating the law. The only thing we need to do is to PUT ON CHRIST – letting Him take control of our lives and allowing Him to live out His life in and through us.

28 This is the meaning of the testimony of the apostle Paul in Galatians 2:20:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

29 This is what it means to be a Christian. A Christian is someone who is fully indwelt and controlled by Christ, in such a way that only the life of Christ is filling in and flowing out of the person's life.

30 Put on Christ! Live out Christ's life!

CHALLENGE

31 In conclusion, let's always remember:

- (1) God rules sovereignly over all. Whether we recognize this or not, it is God's will that shall always be accomplished.

- (2) Part of God's rule is His establishment of governments and of rulers. All kings, presidents, prime ministers of nations are seated in their positions because God put them there.
- (3) For this reason, God commands everyone to be subject to the government and its laws and be obedient to its officials, as long as they do not contradict God's laws.
- (4) But the moment that the laws of governments and officials contradict God's laws, then Christians must make a stand to obey God rather than people. And for the sake of obedience to God, the Christian is ready to accept any punishment that the government may impose.
- (5) Someday, all governments and all rulers will face the judgment bar of God, and there they will receive the just reward or punishment for whatever they have done for or against Christians.

32 Besides obedience to the government and to its officials, we have other duties as Christian citizens.

- (1) First, because in the Philippines we have freedom and democracy, we must use our right to vote intelligently. We must vote for candidates who have good platforms for the nation. We must vote our conscience, and leave the results to God. Whoever wins, we must accept that to be the will of God.
- (2) Secondly, we must pray for our leaders.

1 Timothy 2:1-4:

Therefore I ^[a]exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, ²for kings and all who are in ^[b]authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and ^[c]reverence. ³For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- (3) Thirdly, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we must live as salt and light in the world. Where there is darkness, let us shine the light of the truth of God's word. Where there is corruption, let us live as salt in righteousness and holiness to prevent the spread of wickedness.

Matthew 5:13-16:

¹³ "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the

house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

33 As our closing prayer, let us do the following:

- (1) Let's make a commitment that we will strive to be better citizens and to be more effective salt and light in our society.
- (2) Let's make a commitment that we will make it a regular habit to pray for our government and all our leaders.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 13:14: But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. Romans 13:14

LESSON 23:

SERVING IN SPITE OF DIFFERENCES

1 Have you ever wondered, "Why are there so many denominations and churches? They all claim to follow the Bible, but why don't they have unity among themselves?"

2 The variety and differences among many denominations present a big puzzle to many Christians who desire unity. Not only do we have differences among denominations; even inside the church we find differences of opinions and viewpoints. We observe Christians and different leaders who have different stands regarding many things.

3 Let mention some of these things:

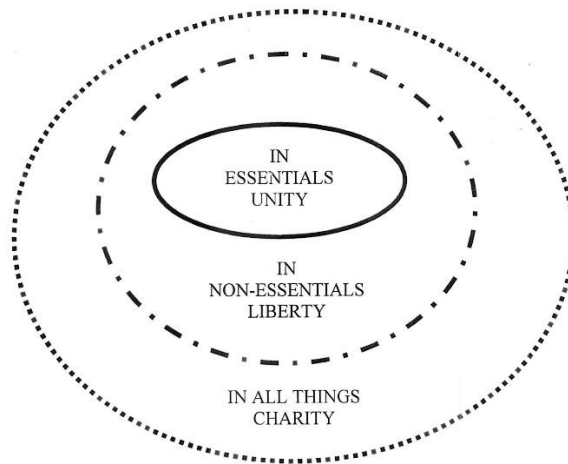
- In proper dress. Some Christians believe that in the church, women should wear dresses, not pants.
- In worship style. Some churches use only piano or organ and sing only hymns; other churches have bands (consisting of drums, guitars, other instruments) and they sing modern praise songs; while a few churches don't use instruments at all and sing only the psalms set to music.

- About foods. Some churches follow Old Testament dietary restrictions, specially the prohibition against eating blood. Most Christians agree with this saying, “I eat anything that doesn’t bite me.”
- Regarding fellowship with other groups. Some churches practice what they call “separation” (no fellowship with other Christian groups who do not belong to their denomination). Other churches claim to be “ecumenical” (open to fellowshipping with any group which claims to be Christian).
- We may mention many other things over which Christians hold different views and convictions, and over which they separate from one another.

4 Is there a way by which we can evaluate our differences in order to have a firm personal conviction regarding our own opinions, beliefs, and practices? Yes, Romans 14 provides us with guidelines and principles to help us deal with differences of opinions and practices.

THREE AREAS

5 Before we examine Romans 14, we must realize that there are three areas of life where we may have differences of opinions and beliefs. In each of these areas, there is a corresponding principle for us to follow as Christians. Please study the figure below.



- AREA 1: IN ESSENTIALS – UNITY
- AREA 2: IN NON-ESSENTIALS – LIBERTY

- AREA 3: IN ALL THINGS – CHARITY

6 AREA 1: IN ESSENTIALS – UNITY. Area 1 refers to truths that affect salvation. For example, the truth that SALVATION IS BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH ALONE (Ephesians 2:8, 9); this is an essential truth and Christians must have unity regarding this truth. There is no room for Christians to have differences of opinion regarding this essential truth.

7 However, in AREA 2: IN NON-ESSENTIALS, Christians have the liberty or freedom to have differences of belief. For example, regarding the MODE or manner of baptism; is it immersion or sprinkling or pouring? Salvation does not depend on the manner of a person's baptism, as long as it is understood that baptism symbolizes a person's faith in Christ as Savior and Lord.

8 Another example in AREA 2 is the style of worship. Should you sing only hymns, or also use modern praise songs? The songs you use in worship are not necessary for salvation. There should be liberty regarding this matter.

9 We repeat: In matters that do not affect our salvation, we must give one another freedom, as long as they do not lead to sin. Let us not impose on others our opinions or styles or simply because of different preferences.

10 In AREA 3, we must make sure that IN ALL THINGS, CHARITY (LOVE) will be our motivation and guide, even as we emphasize unity in essential matters, and as we exercise our freedom and liberty in non-essential matters.

THE SITUATION IN ROME

11 Now, let's consider the situation in the church at Rome. According to Bible scholars, the church had of two main groups of believers. One group consisted of Jews who had become Christians. The other group consisted mainly of pagans from among the Gentiles. Because of the different cultural backgrounds of these two groups, some opinions and practices by either group differed from one another. The differences centered primarily in two areas:

- Regarding foods. What Christians may or may not eat.
- Regarding the day of worship. Which day of the week should Christians honor as the day of worship?

12 Here in Romans 14, the apostle Paul gives guidelines regarding how to deal with differences of opinions and practices among church members.

GUIDELINE 1: ACCEPT

13 The first and most important guideline when there are differences of opinion and practice is to accept one another as God has accepted us, and avoid arguing with one another.

Romans 14:1, 3:

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. . . . ³ Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

14 The church consists of members from different backgrounds in language and culture (for example, Tagalog, Bisaya, Ilocano, Bicol, etc.). As far as food is concerned, these groups have different tastes. In the church in Rome, members from the Jewish background had many food restrictions; but members from Gentile background had no such restrictions. We must remember that salvation does not depend on food. That's why the best attitude inside the church is to accept one another and not to make differences as the cause for divisions inside the church.

15 Here in our church, what differences among members are you aware of that Satan might use to cause division among us?

GUIDELINE 2: AVOID JUDGING

16 Secondly, we must avoid judging others. Only God has the right to judge each one of us.

Romans 14:4, 12:

⁴ Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

¹² So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

17 God has a wonderful promise in Romans 14:4: Only the Lord has the right to judge, whether we stand or fall; and the Lord Himself will give us the power to remain standing and not to fall.

18 This does not mean that we ignore other Christians, and say to them that they have no business intruding into our lives. No; as members of God's family, we must have concern for one another.

19 Rather, what this means is that in matters that do not concern our salvation and when we are not committing any clear sin, we must give each other freedom to be different. Each of us have our own personal relationship with God, and our conscience must guide us in what is good and bad for ourselves.

GUIDELINE 3: RESPECT THE MOTIVES

20 Third, we must respect the motive why a Christian brother/sister is doing what he/she is doing, whether he/she is doing the thing for the Lord.

Romans 14:6:

⁶ He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; [^a] and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

21 Even if what another Christian is doing is different from our expectation, we must give him/her the benefit of the doubt. Let's avoid imputing wrong motives behind the actions or practices that may differ from those of ours. Let's always assume that they are doing things for the glory of God.

22 This is the motive or reason that we must always seek to have: ALWAYS TO DO THINGS TO PLEASE GOD.

GUIDELINE 4: AVOID BECOMING A STUMBLINGBLOCK

23 Fourth, whatever we do or don't do, let's make sure that we do not put a stumbling block in the way of others. We may think that some action or practice is not wrong for us, and we are sure that the Bible gives no clear prohibition about the matter. However, if the matter will put a stumbling block in the way of other Christians, specially those who are less mature in the faith, we must avoid doing that thing.

Romans 14:15, 21:

¹⁵ Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.

²¹ It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles^l or is offended or is made weak.

24 For example, regarding the matter of proper dress (no offense intended, specially for the ladies). Do you ever ask yourself, "Will my dress serve as an occasion for temptation because it reveals too much?"

25 In the church in Rome, the matter of eating meat and drinking wine was a problem. Some members insisted that they were free to eat and drink as they liked. However, the apostle Paul enjoined everybody, "If my eating meat or drinking wine causes someone to stumble, it is better for me to refrain from eating meat and drinking wine."

26 Here in our church, what things should we avoid because they may cause others to stumble?

GUIDELINE 5: FOLLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT.

27 Fifth, always follow the Holy Spirit's leading. We can be sure to avoid committing mistakes or causing a stumbling block if we consistently follow the Holy Spirit's leadership. Let's always seek the Holy Spirit's blessing, which is more precious than any pleasure we gain from enjoying material things such as food and drink.

Romans 14:17:

¹⁷for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

GUIDELINE 6: WHEN IN DOUBT, DON'T.

28 There is a helpful saying, "When in doubt, don't!" This means, don't do anything about which you have any doubt or you have no clarity about. Always strive, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to have clear understanding about everything according the God's Word. Whenever you are unclear about something, or you have some doubts about it, it is better not to proceed until you get full clarity and guidance.

Romans 14:22, 23:

²²Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. ²³But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

29 The problem of differences of opinions and practices raises this question: HOW DO I KNOW IF SOMETHING IS ALLOWED OR FORBIDDEN?

30 Some Christians ask: Is this permitted or prohibited?

31 Others say: There is no verse in the Bible that forbids such and such a thing.

32 Right, a lot of things are not specifically mentioned as prohibited in the Bible. But there are principles in the Bible that serve as our guide whether a thing is sinful or not.

- PRINCIPLE 1: THE BODY IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

33 This is the over-all principle that will guide us: The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20:

19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body ^[g]and in your spirit, which are God's.

34 This principle means that anything which destroys our body should be avoided.

35 For example, the Bible says nothing about smoking. But we know that smoking ruins the health of the body. For this reason, we must treat smoking as something prohibited for the sake of the health of our body.

36 Therefore, we must always ask: Is this beneficial or harmful to my body? If it is harmful, we must never do it or use it.

37 The next two principles are found in 1 Corinthians 6:12:

12 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

- PRINCIPLE 2: IS IT BENEFICIAL?

38 We get this principle from the first part of 1 Corinthians 6:12: *“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful.”* According to the apostle Paul, simply because something is not prohibited doesn't mean you may do it. The more important question is: IS THIS THING HELPFUL? Does this thing help me to get closer to God? Will it strengthen my faith as well as the faith of others? If it doesn't positively help, then I must not do it.

39 A very relevant example from our time is this: What about watching shows (tv, on digital devices)? The question we must ask is this: How can I use my time better, by watching shows or by reading my Bible? I do not commit sin if I watch shows (non-pornographic shows, that is). But reading or studying my Bible helps me grow in my faith better.

- PRINCIPLE 3: WILL I BECOME ADDICTED?

40 This principle comes out of the second part of 1 Corinthians 6:12: *“All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”* Even if something is not forbidden, according to the apostle Paul, the question to ask is: WILL I BECOME A SLAVE TO THIS

THING? In other words, will I become an addict to this thing or this habit? If I become an addict (a slave) to this thing or habit, I must avoid doing it.

41 Here, the question about smoking becomes relevant. The smoking habit is addictive. How so? Well, whenever the craving for cigarette comes, a person gets restless and does not feel comfortable until he/she gets a cigarette. A habit becomes a vice when you are not able to resist it, and this proves that you are a slave to it.

42 True, there is no verse in the Bible that says, “Don’t smoke”. But I must treat it as something sinful and forbidden for me because it will make me a slave and an addict to it.

43 Let’s examine ourselves by asking: WHAT THING OR HABIT IS MAKING A SLAVE OF ME RIGHT NOW? If something is making me a slave, I must call upon God right now and ask Him to deliver me from such addiction and enslavement.

44 As a closing challenge, let me invite you make a commitment:

- If you have not yet received Christ as your Savior and Lord, do so right now.
- If you feel you are a slave or an addict to something or some habit, ask God’s forgiveness right now and ask Him to give you deliverance from now on.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 14:19: Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Romans 14:19

LESSON 24:

**CO-LABORERS
IN THE GREAT COMMISSION**

1 Have you heard the saying, “A chain is only as strong as the weakest link”?

2 God has connected us Christians to one another like a chain in order to reach those who are still far from Christ. Each Christian serves as a link in this chain. If one link is weak the chain is in danger of breaking, and we would not be able to reach the lost person we intend to save.

3 This is why we need to build up one another as co-laborers with God in order to fulfill the Great Commission. In Romans 15 we see the example of the Lord Jesus and of the apostle Paul, how we must encourage one another in order that we might be able to serve the Lord together more effectively and more fruitfully.

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE

4 What should be our attitude and what should be our action toward brothers and sisters who are weak (those who are lacking in knowledge and experience in the Christian life)?

Romans 15:1, 2:

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.

5 Very often, in real life what is the attitude of the strong towards the weak? In the field of sports, for example, in basketball. If one of your team members is weak, what is usually your attitude toward him?

- (a) You might BLAME him, specially if he caused your team to lose.
- (b) You might become IMPATIENT with him, because he is a slow learner.
- (c) You might RIDICULE him, just make fun at your weak team member.
- (d) Or you might get ANGRY with him, specially when you keep losing because of his weakness and slowness.
- (e) And finally, if he doesn't improve, you might just ask your coach to BENCH him permanently, or even remove him from the team.

6 Feelings like the above are common in sports, but they can also be manifested in the church. We Christians are like one team, and each has our respective roles to play. We are always facing a competition or a fight. Our opponents are strong. Every member of our team must be skilled in playing.

7 But if we have a weak member on our team, we will be tempted to have feelings like that in sports – we blame, we become impatient, we make fun, at finally we get angry and we want to cut the weak member from our team.

8 But that was not the attitude of Christ.

Romans 15:3, 5, 6:

³ For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." . . . ⁵ Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 From Christ's example, what should be our attitude toward one another, specially toward the weak? We are to accept one another in the same way that Christ accepted us. Instead of being frustrated or angry or abandoning a weak brother/sister, we must help him/her to become strong; we must teach, support, and encourage him/her.

Romans 15:7:

⁷ Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received ^[d]us, to the glory of God.

10 Please, don't feel offended, but I have a personal question for everyone. Here in our congregation, is there a member that you think is so slow in growing in faith? Do you know of a member who is lazy in serving the Lord? And because of this, do you feel tempted by Satan to have the attitude of frustration and impatience? Are you tempted to look down on that brother or sister? Do you feel Satan tempting you to be angry and think of simply leaving that brother/sister behind and just not include him/her anymore in any ministry?

11 Brothers and sisters, if we have such feelings and attitudes, let's repent. Let's keep in mind: Christ accepted us without any condition. We ourselves have not been faithful; we have failed; we have neglected our spiritual responsibilities many times, too. There were times when we were lazy and did not feel like doing anything for the Lord.

12 During those times when we were cold and lazy in our faith, did Christ get frustrated with us? Did Christ make fun of us? Did Christ get angry with us and leave us behind? NO!

13 Instead, Christ continued to call us back, the Holy Spirit did not stop convicting us, He kept knocking at our hearts and calling us to repent and return to the Lord. That's the reason God gave us the promise of 1 John 1:9:

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

14 Christ forgave us. He received us back. And in the same way that the Lord forgave us and welcomed us back, in the same way we should show the same attitude to our weak members.

Let's support them, not leave them behind; let's build them up, instead of losing patience with them.

15 God is training us in order to function as one team in the Body of Christ. For example, if your hand gets wounded and it develops an infection, do you say: "My hand is causing me so much pain, why don't I cut it off"? Or if your foot develops infection and causes constant itching, do you say: "I'm so frustrated by this constant itching, why don't I just cut off my foot"?

16 Sad to say, in the church some members think that way. When a member is causing a problem, someone will say, "It's better if we remove that person from church membership." If we did that, our church will end up like a physical body with hands or feet cut off.

17 Let's read Romans 15:1, 2 again:

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification.

18 We must never be impatient or angry with a weak member, and must never leave him/her behind. Let's help him/her to get stronger and to grow mature in faith in the Lord.

19 We all have been made to be a part of the Body of Christ in order to us to become strong soldiers in the Great Commission Army. Like the apostle Paul, we must not forget the big job entrusted to us, followers of Christ: TO OBEY AND FINISH THE GREAT COMMISSION.

20 Let's remind ourselves of the Great Commission that the Lord Jesus gave in Matthew 28:18-20:

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." [d] Amen.

PAUL'S EXAMPLE

21 Let's follow the example of the apostle Paul. He fully understood the two parts of the Great Commission:

- EVANGELISM. Proclaiming the Gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations."

- DISCIPLESHIP. Building up believers to maturity in their faith in Christ: “Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”

22 Let’s look more closely at these two parts of the Great Commission.

(a) EVANGELISM: The apostle Paul always kept this task of evangelism as a priority.

Romans 15:20, 21:

²⁰ And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation, ²¹ but as it is written:

*“To whom He was not announced, they shall see;
And those who have not heard shall understand.”*

23 We, as individual Christians, do we have that same desire in our hearts? We, as a church, do we have that same intense passion? Yes, brothers and sister, as soldiers of Christ’s Great Commission Army, our goal is to reach the world. Our goal is to share the Gospel of Christ to everyone who has never heard of Him. All members of our church must unite around that one goal and work. No member, not even one, is exempted – all of us are soldiers of Christ, children, youth, and parents, grandfathers and grandmothers, too!

(b) This is God’s will for all of us: TO REACH THE WHOLE WORLD FOR CHRIST!

(c) Did you hear what I said? OUR WORLD?

(d) Yes, each of us has our own world. We call this our CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE. Who are inside our circle of influence?

- FIRST, OUR FAMILY, those we live with in our home. Are we sure that everyone in our home know the Lord Jesus as their Savior? They must be the first people to whom we should share the Gospel.
- SECOND, OUR RELATIVES. Let’s list the names of our relatives who live close to us, in our city; let’s try to reach them first. Then, let’s plan to reach relatives who live in other places far from us. If it is difficult to travel to their place, we can call them or write to them.
- THIRD, OUR FRIENDS. Let’s also list the names of our friends, and let’s try to share with them the Gospel one person at a time.

- FOURTH, OUR CO-WORKERS. People that we work with in the office or at our jobs. Let's make an appointment with them, perhaps to have coffee or lunch with them.
- FIFTH, OUR NEIGHBORS.
- SIXTH, PEOPLE THAT GOD BRINGS INTO CONTACT WITH US. In our daily activity or when we travel, God will often arrange situations where we are able to get into conversation with people. As the Lord leads, let's see if there is an opportunity to share the Gospel with them. Often, it helps if we carry tracts with us, which we can give out to people we meet.

(e) We must intentionally plan to reach our world around us. Let's do the following steps:

- List the names of people you plan to share the Gospel with.
- Pray for the people on your list, daily if you have time; or at least once a week.
- Always have Gospel tracts with you.
- Invite your prospects to a Bible study or to an evangelistic meeting or to an event in church. It is good for the church to plan to hold SPECIAL EVANGELISTIC EVENTS (SEE), such as drama, movie, Gospel music concert, etc., probably once every three months.
- Study and master a short Gospel presentation such as the Gospel Hand.

(2) DISCIPLESHIP.

The Great Commission, as the apostle Paul understood it, involved not only evangelism. It involves training in discipleship, in which new believers are built up in their faith. This was Paul's strong desire on behalf of the Christians in Rome. Yes, the believers in Rome probably knew much of the Christian faith, and they also already had much Christian experience. Still, that doesn't mean they are already perfect in Christ. That's why, until that perfection is attained, the apostle Paul's desire was to help them to grow even more in their faith.

Romans 15:14-16:

¹⁴ Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish ^[1] one another. ¹⁵ Nevertheless, brethren, I have written more boldly to you on some points, as reminding you, because of the

grace given to me by God, ¹⁶ that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering ^[s] of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

23 That was the passionate desire of the apostle Paul, that all believers in Christ might become perfect and fully accepted before the Lord. Growth in the faith does never stops in this life; it will be completed only when we get to heaven. Therefore, like the apostle Paul, we must not stop teaching all members in our congregation until they have learned to obey ALL THAT CHRIST COMMANDED.

24 No member must be left behind! We must all attain complete perfection in Christ!

CLOSING CHALLENGE

25 I don't know what the Philippine Navy now does in training its cadets, but in the 1980s, part of the training of new recruits was taking care of one "buddy" or friend. Do you know what this buddy was? It could be any insect or little creature (ant, lizard, spider, etc.). The purpose was for each trainee to protect at all cost his "buddy" from being captured or harmed by others.

26 The purpose of this training was for them to learn how to protect their fellow soldier later on in times of real combat in the future.

27 That is the lesson being emphasized here in Romans 15. Every Christian, every fellow member, is our "buddy" that we must always seek to help, assist and protect.

28 No matter what happens, for better or for worse, in war or in peace, at all times, we must be ready to offer our lives for the good of our fellow believers, and they in turn will be ready to offer their lives for us.

29 And we will do this in obedience and in order to follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has accepted us as His "buddy", so much so that He offered Himself on the cross for us. And now, he lives in order to protect us and to help us and save us at all times and in any situation.

30 This is the final challenge for us:

31 Are we ready to make a promise and commitment to one another as members of one church? Are we ready to make the following commitment?

FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST, AND WITH THE HELP OF CHRIST, I ACCEPT EVERY MEMBER OF THIS CHURCH AS MY "BUDDY" WHOM I WILL HELP, PROTECT, AND

SUPPORT, UNTIL WE ALL ARRIVE TOGETHER AT THE DESTINATION THAT GOD HAS SET FOR US?

32 If we do this, with the help of the Holy Spirit, Christ will use us as victorious and fruitful soldiers of Christ's Great Commission Army, in order to reach many souls for Him, and He will use us to build up other Christians in the faith.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 15:7: Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received ^{us}, to the glory of God. Romans 15:7

LESSON 25:

**PICTURE OF GENUINE
CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP**

1 Congratulations to you who have journeyed through this wonderful adventure of studying the apostle Paul's letter to the Roman Christians.

2 In our journey we first explored foundational truths of the Gospel. Indeed, this letter by the apostle Paul to the Romans contain so many truths that will take us months, even years, before we can fathom their meanings and implications. But it is enough that we were able to study basic truths that will help us to do deeper studies in the future. After this lesson, we shall have one final lesson.

3 Now, a question for you: Based on all that we have learned from this letter of the apostle Paul to the Romans, what kind of man, what kind of Christian do you think the apostle Paul was? Please choose one of the following pictures below:

- PICTURE #1: The apostle Paul was a super-saint, with a halo above his head, and because of this he was far and beyond us ordinary people.
- PICTURE #2: The apostle was a very strict teacher, with a stick in his hand, ready to hit any student who was slow or who made a wrong answer.
- PICTURE #3: The apostle Paul was a loving, kind and understanding person who was always busy in the work of the Lord, but he had no time to have fellowship with others.

4 Based on what you have learned from your study of this letter to the Romans, which of the three pictures do you have in your mind concerning the apostle Paul? Those who choose Picture #1, please raise your hand. Those who choose Picture #2, please raise your hand. Those who choose Picture #3, please do the same.

5 Those of you who did not raise your hand, you are correct. The apostle Paul was a very dedicated Christian, but he was not aloof from other Christians. He was a very good teacher but he was not impatient with slow students. He was a very busy missionary but he always had time to fellowship with ordinary members of the church. Here in Romans 16 we discover that the apostle Paul was a GENUINE CHRISTIAN FRIEND. And he is a good example to follow regarding friendship.

PAUL, A GENUINE FRIEND

6 What proofs do we have that the apostle Paul was a genuine friend? Based on Romans 16, we see that Paul was a true friend because of the many and different persons that he greeted. He not only greeted these people, he also mentioned qualities which he appreciated about them. Let's open our Bibles and let's count the people he greeted by name. I'll give you a few moments to count them.

7 Did you come up with the same number I did?

- 27 persons (individuals), 2 of them not named, the mother of Rufus and the sister of Nereus.
- 10 women (Priscilla, a married woman; 8 single women; and one mother);
- 5 groups of people (the church in the home of Priscilla and Aquila; the household of Aristobulos; the household of Narcisus; the brethren companion of Asyncritus; and the believers associated with Philologus).

8 What was Paul's relationship to these people?

(a) First, his relationship with fellow-workers:

- Phoebe – Commentators say that Paul was at Corinth when he wrote his letter to the Romans; Phoebe was a worker as Cenchreae, a city about 7 miles from Corinth. Most probably Phoebe was passing by Corinth on her way to Rome. Because of this, Paul had the opportunity to send a letter to Rome through Phoebe.

- Priscilla and Aquilla – they were close associates of Paul in ministry.
- Mary – a worker who had helped many.
- Urbanus – a worker.
- Tryphena and Tryphosa, sisters; their name comes from the word TRUPHAO, which means “well to do”; some commentators suggest that these sisters came from a rich family but they were humble enough to serve the Lord sacrificially and faithfully.
- Persis – a faithful and fruitful worker.

(b) Secondly, Paul greeted people who were close to him because they had experiences together in ministry and that he owed them debt of gratitude.

- Priscilla and Aquila – put their lives on the line for the sake of Paul.
- Andronicus and Junia – they were in prison together; he acknowledged them as having become believers before he did.
- The mother of Rufus – whom Paul considered as a second mother.

(c) Third, Paul greeted individuals whom he valued for their special qualities:

- Epaphroditus – the first convert in Asia;
- Persis – a faithful and fruitful worker;
- Apelles – a tested follower of the Lord;
- Rufus – someone close to the Lord; most probably the son of Simon of Cyrene, who helped carry Jesus’ cross (Mark 15:21).

(d) This does not mean that Paul showed favoritism toward anyone. Relationship with friends is like a plant that grows and blossoms as it is watered; it grows deeper and stronger as a result of experiences which friends go through together.

7 These are some questions we must all ask:

- Who and how many are the people you consider close friends because of your partnership with them in serving the Lord?
- Who and how many are the people you consider as close friends because you have unforgettable experiences together and who have given you help which you cannot forget?
- Who and how many are the friends who have qualities that you admire greatly?

THE FRIEND ABOVE ALL OTHERS

8 Let us imitate the apostle Paul's example as a true friend. In fact, he was imitating the Lord Jesus, who is the true friend above all others. Do you remember what the Lord said to his disciples about who a true friend is?

John 15:13-15:

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. ¹⁴ You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. ¹⁵ No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

9 The Lord Jesus is the friend above all others! This is an amazing truth, that our Lord and Savior gave Himself to us as our friend.

10 In the Old Testament this truth was also revealed by God when He called Abraham as His friend.

2 Chronicles 20:7:

⁷ Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever?

Isaiah 41:8:

⁸ "But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend.

James 2:23:

²³ And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was ^[i]accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God.

11 God the Almighty Creator of all things, the Eternal One, called Abraham His friend, a creature made of dust and with a very brief span of life! And not only Abraham, but all of us who are Abraham's children by faith – we Christians – are given the privilege to be the friends of God and of His Son Jesus Christ. This is the meaning of fellowship with God.

1 Corinthians 1:9:

⁹ *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

1 John 1:3:

³ *that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

12 What is the basis of our friendship with God and with the Lord Jesus? Let's study carefully John 15:13-15:

- FIRST, CHRIST GAVE HIS LIFE FOR US. John 15:13 – *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.*

In our relationship to our friends, as Christians we must also be ready to give our life for one another.

- SECOND, WE OBEY HIS COMMANDS. John 15:14 – *You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.*

In our Christian friendship, we must all obey the commands of Christ.

- THIRD, WE MUST BE FULLY UNITED IN CHRIST IN FULFILLING GOD'S PLAN. John 15:15 – *No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

In our friendship as Christians, we must be united in fulfilling God's plan, specially the Great Commission.

13 If we closely examine the relationship of the apostle Paul with his friends, based on Romans 16, we will discover that he followed the three foundations of Christian friendship we mentioned above.

- Paul and his friends were ready to give their lives for one another.

- Paul and his friends were united in fulfilling the commands of Christ.
- Paul and his friends were united in fulfilling God’s plan; they were partners in fulfilling the Great Commission.

WRONG FRIENDSHIP

14 Our study regarding the friendships of the apostle Paul gives us an opportunity to discuss God’s warning regarding the wrong kind of friendship.

James 4:4:

⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

15 Adulterers and adulteresses! These are very harsh words, don’t you think? But that is God’s judgment on Christians who maintain friendship with the sinful world! Why so? Because a Christian’s relationship with Christ is like that between a bride and a bridegroom. Christ is the groom and we Christians are His bride. The sinful world is like another man; if we have a relationship with another man other than Christ, then we commit spiritual adultery.

16 There is also a warning for singles. God prohibits Christians from having a boy-girl relationship with non-Christians. Such a relationship is called being “unequally yoked”.

2 Corinthians 6:14:

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what ^[d]fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what ^[e]communion has light with darkness?

17 Christian singles, you can trust God completely. Pray that He will give you the right life-partner who will be your companion for life. Remember what God did for Adam before He gave Eve to be his wife. God caused Adam to fall asleep, and while he was asleep God prepared Eve for him. When Eve was ready, God woke Adam up and gave him his partner for life.

18 Today, the meaning of going to SLEEP is to wait for the right time God has set. While waiting, keep praying. Keep growing in your faith. Finish your education. Forget about having a serious relationship with the opposite sex.

19 Of course, develop friendships, but avoid having a special friend. If you feel specially attracted to someone, pray about it. If that guy/girl is really for you, you may trust God to keep that person for you. That person also needs time to grow and to be prepared to become a worthy life partner for you.

20 Some young men may ask, “But, pastor, when do I express my love for her?” Express your love after you’re done with your education and when you’re ready to have a serious relationship.

21 The young ladies may also ask, “Pastor, what do I say when someone expresses his interest in me?” Say this, “If your feeling is really according to God’s will, pray about it until you are sure that I’m the one God intends for you.”

22 For those of you who already have a boy friend/girl friend, heed this one warning: **ABSOLUTELY AVOID SEX BEFORE MARRIAGE.** Avoid all close physical contacts.

23 The enemy is very tricky.

24 In the beginning, Satan will whisper, “Nothing wrong with holding hands.”

25 Next, he will whisper, “A little kiss won’t hurt.”

26 Not long after, he will whisper, “A little hug, a little embrace, is ok.”

27 Before you know it, a little kiss, a little embrace, all of a sudden you are BUNTIS (pregnant)!

28 Someone asked a bus driver, “How close can you drive to the edge of a ravine?” He answered, “I will drive as far as I can from the ravine.”

29 This is the warning to young people, and even to adults, we are always tempted by Satan to play with temptation; he continually whispers to us, “It’s okay to go as far as you can as long as you are able to pull yourself back from committing the actual sin.”

30 The safe driver always drives as far as possible away from the ravine. The victorious Christian is someone who always tries to stay as far away from sin as possible.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

31 In closing, let’s summarize what we learned:

32 Who are true Christian friends?

- TRUE CHRISTIAN FRIENDS are ready to give their life for one another.
- TRUE CHRISTIAN FRIENDS are united in obeying the commands of Christ.

- TRUE CHRISTIAN FRIENDS are united in fulfilling God's plan; they are co-laborers in fulfilling the Great Commission.

33 Let's examine what kind of friendships we have. Are our friendships characterized by these qualities? If not, let's try to build these qualities into our friendships. Let's not allow our friends to draw us away from the Lord. Rather, with the Lord's help, let us be the ones to draw them closer to God.

34 And for anyone who may not be sure of your relationship to the Lord Jesus, we challenge you today to come to Christ and receive Him as your Savior, Lord and Friend.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 16:16: Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹⁹The churches of Christ greet you.
Romans 16:16

LESSON 26:

VICTORY OVER SATAN

1 Congratulations to all!

2 Finally, we have reached the FINISH LINE! This is our final lesson on the letter of the apostle Paul to the Roman Christians... at least, for now. In the future, you will have more opportunity to study in greater depth this profound letter.

3 It is only fitting that our final study will be on VICTORY OVER SATAN.

4 At the beginning of our study, we learned that that this letter to the Roman Christians was about the Gospel or good news of salvation. This is salvation from sin and from all its effects on people and the world, in the past, present and future.

5 To a great extent, salvation also means VICTORY OVER SATAN.

ASSURANCE OF VICTORY

6 This is God's promise to us in this letter to the Romans. God guarantees that we will have victory over Satan.

Romans 16:20:

And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

7 This is in fulfillment of God's first promise given at the very beginning, regarding the promised Redeemer and His victory over Satan, who had caused our first parents to fall into sin.

Genesis 3:15:

*And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel."*

8 But Satan is a spirit that is invisible to us. How do we overcome him?

9 True, Satan is invisible to us. But we see the people that he uses as his instruments, and we will gain victory over Satan as we are able to avoid and defeat the wiles and attacks of his human instruments.

10 One thing we must remember above all else. Satan will bring in his minions and mix them among the members of the church. The Lord Jesus Himself warned us about this.

Matthew 13:24-26, 37-39:

²⁴ Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵ but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. ²⁶ But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

³⁷ He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.

11 The apostle Paul gave a similar warning. When he bade farewell to the Christians in Ephesus, he warned them very clearly and firmly.

Acts 20:29, 30:

²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking ^[h]perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

12 In this world we will find two kinds of people, the children of God and the children of the devil. Both kinds of people will grow together in this world.

13 Sad to say that even inside the church, Satan will succeed in placing his minions. How could we tell who are these “weeds” which are mixed among the true wheat? Only God can see into the heart of people, and only God has the right to judge them. However, there are evidences that we may be able to observe regarding the devil’s followers.

Romans 16:17-18:

17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. 18 For those who are such do not serve our Lord [d] Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

14 Let’s analyze these two verses carefully. According to Romans 16:16, 17, there are four evidences by which we may tell who are Satan’s agents.

- FIRST, THEY CAUSE DIVISION.
- SECOND, THEY CAUSE STUMBLING BLOCKS.
- THIRD, THEY SERVE THEIR BELLIES.
- FOURTH, THEY ARE FLATTERERS.

Let’s describe these evidences one by one.

THEY CAUSE DIVISIONS.

15 Satan is a very shrewd war general. He uses strategy and tactics very effectively. One tactic that’s been proven very effective is to cause division inside the church. This follows the saying, DIVIDE AND CONQUER.

16 You remember the story of ten brothers who were always fighting one another. One day their father called them and gave each of them a stick. The father then told the sons to break their respective sticks, which they were able to do very easily. After that the father tied ten sticks into one bundle; then one by one, he told his sons to try and break the bundled sticks. This time, no matter how hard they tried, no one could break the bundled sticks. The father then gave them the lesson of their life, saying, “My sons, individually you are like one stick; by yourself alone your

enemy will be able to defeat you easily. But like the bundled sticks, when all of you unite together as one, your enemy cannot defeat you just like you could not break the bundle of sticks.” From that time on, the sons stopped fighting one another and tried to maintain unity with one another.

17 Satan is an expert in using the tactic of DIVIDE AND CONQUER. That is what his followers will try to do inside the church. We will know who Satan’s followers are when we see who are the people who are causing division among members. How do they cause division? One way is to spread gossip and false rumors, pitting one member against another. They will say, “Do you know what so and so is saying about you?” This will start bad feelings and cause a fight between those members.

18 Not only among members. Satan’s agents will spread gossip and false stories about the pastor and other leaders. This will cause members to lose confidence in their leaders. This will also result in members becoming rebellious against leaders.

19 How do we defeat gossip and false rumors? We must take two decisive actions:

- Don’t entertain gossip.
- Don’t spread gossip.

THREE STEPS

20 However, if you think there might be a possibility that there is some truth to the rumor, the best action to take is to follow the THREE STEPS that the Lord commanded in order to solve a problem in the church.

Matthew 18:15-17:

¹⁵ “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶ But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ ¹⁷ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

21 Please note carefully the three steps:

- **STEP 1: PERSONAL, ONE-ON-ONE PRIVATE CONVERSATION.** If you hear about any problem regarding a member, don’t gossip about it. Rather, go directly to that member and privately talk, just the two of you, to discuss the matter. Try to settle the

problem between the two of you. And if you succeed in settling the matter, then that's the end of it. Don't let anybody else know about what you talked about. However, if you are not able to settle the matter in your one-on-one conversation, you may proceed to the next step.

- **STEP 2: BRING ONE OR TWO MATURE MEMBERS TO SERVE AS WITNESSES.** With the help of one or two other mature Christians, talk to the "problem member". If you are able to settle the matter at this level, that is the end of the matter. You also must no longer talk about the matter, specially to other people. However, if the matter cannot be settled at this level, you may proceed to the final step.
- **STEP 3: BRING THE MATTER TO THE CHURCH.** This means that you and the witnesses you involved in Step 2 will bring the matter to the attention of the leaders of the church, beginning with the pastor and the elders and deacons. The leaders will make the appropriate investigation, and after ascertaining the facts of the case, they will bring the matter to the church at a duly called business meeting. At that meeting the "problem member" will be called to explain himself/herself before the church. The church leaders will give the member a plan for repentance and restoration. If the "problem member" follows the plan, then everything will be settled at this level and all the members will be instructed to forgive and accept and restore the "problem member", and the matter will no longer be talked about or mentioned again. However, if the "problem member" refuses to follow the plan for forgiveness and restoration, the church will vote to remove that member from the membership list of the church. From that point on, the church will treat that member and will pray for that member as if he/she were a non-Christian needing salvation.

CAUSING A STUMBLING BLOCK

22 A second evidence that shows a person is an agent of Satan, is that he/she causes a stumbling block in the way of others (Romans 16:17).

What are these stumblinglocks? We may mention two:

- **FALSE DOCTRINE.**

23 We should be on guard against the entrance of false doctrines and false beliefs into the church. Satan's agents will be exposed when they teach doctrines that are contrary to the Bible. To guard against false doctrines we must teach members to study the Bible for themselves and teach them correct doctrines of the faith. For example, in our study of this letter to the Romans we learned the true doctrine about salvation, that it is by grace through faith alone.

24 Do you know how bank employees are trained to detect counterfeit money? Not by studying counterfeit bills but by carefully noting the characteristics of genuine money.

25 The same way with doctrine. We must study and master correct doctrine so that we will be able to detect false doctrine when it is brought in.

- UNGODLY LIFESTYLE.

26 A second stumbling block is an ungodly lifestyle. If a person claims to be a Christian and yet continues in sin, that person is putting a stumbling block in the path of others so that they will be prevented from coming to Christ. There is a saying, “Your actions speak so loud, I cannot hear what you’re saying.” When outsiders see a so-called church member living in a way contrary to the Bible, that outsider may say, “Well, we’re all the same after all. There’s no difference between Christians and non-Christians.”

27 We will discern who are Satan’s followers because they are all talk but no action; they claim to follow Christ but they don’t walk in the way of holiness, righteousness and love in Christ.

SERVING THEIR BELLIES

28 A third sign that a person is a follower of Satan is that he/she serves his/her stomach (selfish personal gain). What does this mean?

- First, what they say and do arise from selfish motivations. They are always seeking personal gain. They joined the church because of what they hope to profit from it.

29 This is illustrated, for example, in John 6 by the people who followed Jesus after they have seen the miracle of bread and fish being multiplied. They wanted to make Jesus king, for what reason?

John 6:26, 27:

26 Jesus answered them and said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.”

30 There are people who join the church for material gain. And there are churches that try to attract people, promising that if they join their church they will be given jobs, or that they will receive material help from the church.

31 There are also people who don't want to join a church, because they ask, "What do I gain from it?"

32 One reminder to us Christians: We must not convince people to join our church with promises that they will get material and financial benefits.

33 The tactic of Satan is to divert our attention from the spiritual blessings, to focus on material benefits.

34 Therefore, we must always beware of Satan's followers who are always seeking their selfish material advantage instead of serving the Lord.

FLATTERERS

35 A fourth evidence that exposes a person as a follower of Satan is that he/she is a smooth talker, a flatterer. What is flattery? Flattery refers to words that boost the ego of the person you are talking with, words (usually exaggerated or untrue) that feeds that person's wishes and desires, in order to gain his/her sympathy and trust. The flatterer is like a salesperson trying to convince a person to buy something or to join their group. This is how the apostle Paul describes them.

2 Timothy 4:3-4:

³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

36 In these two verses the apostle Paul describes these false teachers and their followers. Their followers want to hear only what agrees with their likes and desires. Therefore, these false teachers, who are followers of Satan, will give them only what they want to hear. They will tickle the ears of their listeners, flatter them and say things that are pleasing and catering to their selfish desires.

37 On the other hand, a true servant of God will faithfully teach God's Word and will speak the truth even if it offends people.

1 Thessalonians 2:3-5:

³ For our exhortation *did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit.*

⁴ *But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.* ⁵ *For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a ^[b]cloak for covetousness—God is witness.*

DIVISION IN THE CHURCH

38 What is the greatest danger posed by these followers of Satan? The greatest danger is that they will cause division in the church, and carry away with them members that they succeed in deceiving.

39 If they don't succeed in dividing the church, they will put a stumbling block for some members that will cause such members to stop coming to church, or to look for another church to join.

40 But if we carefully guard against these followers of Satan, and if we faithfully follow the three steps commanded by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17, we will be able to resolve misunderstandings inside the church, and we will be able to avoid division among members and prevent a church split. But if we tolerate these followers of Satan to operate inside the church, and we are remiss in implementing the three steps of church discipline commanded by the Lord Jesus, we will be in grave danger of division among members and a possible church split.

41 But thank God! This is His promise for us.

Romans 16:20:

And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

CLOSING BENEDICTION

42 As a conclusion, the apostle Paul prayed a prayer of benediction on behalf of the church in Rome.

Romans 16:25-27:

²⁵*Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began ²⁶ but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— ²⁷ to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.*

43 God is the one who will strengthen us. God is the one who will establish us. Let's maintain firmly our trust in God and continually ask for His power and guidance upon us.

44 The strengthening will happen through the Gospel. Let's faithfully proclaim the Gospel of Christ, as we have studied it in this letter of Paul to the Romans.

45 All the glory belongs to God alone. In all our ministry, in all our teaching and serving, let us always seek to bring glory and praise to God alone. We must not take even a little part of that glory for ourselves. Salvation comes completely from God's grace alone, and we are not able to do anything to serve the Lord apart from the help of His Spirit and His grace.

46 Let's offer to God all the thanksgiving and praise because He has enabled us to finish this study on the letter to Romans.

47 But all our study will turn out to be useless unless it results in positive changes in our lives. Therefore, this is our challenge to us everyone.

(a) THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS WAS WRITTEN TO GIVE US ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.

As a result of your study in this study to the Romans, have you received a clearer assurance of your salvation through faith in Christ as your Savior and Lord? If you don't have this assurance, you may wish to speak with the study leader or one of the members about how to have this assurance.

(b) THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS WAS WRITTEN TO SHOW US HOW TO GAIN VICTORY OVER SIN.

As a result of your study in Romans, have you experienced more consistent victory over sin? Regularly meditate on the teachings of Romans regarding how to gain victory over sin through the power of the Holy Spirit. Victory is founded on complete surrender of your life to God and in asking for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. You may take this step of absolute surrender right now, and you may definitely ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit today.

(c) THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS WAS WRITTEN TO EQUIP US TO SERVE THE LORD.

Are you actively serving the Lord? Christians are saved to serve. You may make a definite commitment to start serving the Lord consistently beginning today.

MEMORIZE:

Romans 16:19, 20: ¹⁹ For your obedience has become known to all. Therefore I am glad on your behalf; but I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil. ²⁰ And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. Romans 16:19, 20

WHAT NEXT?

Your next book of study:

NewLife Book 12: Foundational Gospel Truths