

An Introduction to the

Epistle
to the
Romans

Geoffrey C. Bingham

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THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

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A General Introduction

THE VALUE OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT ROME

It is well-known that certain scholars have accused Paul of changing the simple gospel of Christ—which they allege is found in the Four Gospels—into another gospel. i.e. a Pauline gospel, compounded of certain elements which Christ did not at all espouse. For example, it is said that Paul's gospel is primarily forensic, relating to law, doubtless having taken this shape because Paul was a convinced Pharisee, a rabbi, and—as such—trained in matters of the law. Certainly, Paul in Romans talks of 'my gospel' (2:16), but would not contrast that—say—with the gospel other apostles taught. He knew only one gospel, and believed that was recognized by true believers. In Galatians 1:9 he speaks sharply against anyone preaching 'a gospel contrary to that which you received'. He contends that this gospel came to him by revelation and was [is] therefore pure.

PAUL AND THE GOSPEL

When Paul said he was not ashamed of the gospel he did not mean he

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had proof of its value because it worked certain effects when he preached it. Paul's criteria were always doctrinal and theological, i.e. biblical. He was never pragmatic. Whilst it was true that he had seen the gospel work in great power both in his life and the lives of others—yet it was because he understood the nature of the gospel that he had such faith in it. It should be said here that when Paul—as the Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus—opposed the Christians and persecuted them, he had obtained the whole form and substance of the gospel from what they believed and preached. He was not ignorant of their claims. Indeed, he sought to refute these teachings from his own knowledge of Jewish belief, practice, and the Hebrew Scriptures.

This was why his encounter with Jesus of Nazareth on the road to Damascus was so devastating. He realized he had wrongly accused his former Christian opponents of heresy and blasphemy. Three days of blindness in the house in Straight Street in Damascus must have brought considerable revelation to him—albeit, painfully. His own consequent experience of having his blindness healed, his sins washed away in baptism, and of being filled with the Holy Spirit, must have been of such a radical nature and of such dynamic effect as to straightway launch him into a pure knowledge of the crucified, risen and ascended Lord. We can say, simply, that Paul never really expounded any doctrine which—in rich measure—he had not already experienced. His Jewish theological and moral training, received prior to his conversion to Christ's gospel must have been immensely valuable. Hence the breadth, length, depth, and height of this peerless apostle. The genius of Paul is that he does not venture into areas for which he was not commissioned. By this we mean that the three accounts—in the book of Acts—of his conversion (9:1-16; 22:6-16; 26:12-18) show that Christ met him with a view to Paul's proclamation of the gospel to the nations, i.e. the Gentiles (Galatians 1: 15-16). In one sense, we can say the primary reason for his conversion was not his conversion, but the conversion of the nations to Christ!

Whatever the criticisms of scholars, it has to be admitted that the gospel Paul enunciates comports well with the Hebrew Scriptures, and is a clear rationale of Christ's incarnation, life, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. This gospel—as we shall see—is the gospel of the righteousness of God. Whenever it is viewed and understood through the eyes of faith, then a moral power is liberated into the affairs of men and nations. The reason for this will reveal itself more fully as our exposition proceeds, but briefly it is this—whenever human guilt is erased it is followed by moral freedom and power. Human guilt is demoralizing and debilitating. Forgiveness and justification give man back the liberty he knew before his rebellion against God. Such moral liberty outworks itself in the affairs of faith in God and obedience to Him, of personal and inter-personal relationships, of social community, and is therefore of national and international significance.

THE POWER OF THE ROMAN EPISTLE IN CHRISTIAN AND SECULAR HISTORY

Of this Letter to the Romans, Tyndale said:

... this epistle is the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament . . . glad tidings that we call the Gospel and also a light and a way into the whole Scripture ... no man can read it too well or study it too well ... for without doubt whosoever has this epistle perfectly in his heart, the same hath the light and the effect of the Old Testament with him. Wherefore let every man without exception exercise himself diligently and record it day and night continually, until fully acquainted therewith.

It would be difficult even to begin to compute the effect this Letter has had in and upon history. Whenever the church has receded from the

doctrine of justification by faith, then its genius for moral power has waned. It—both church and man—necessarily returns to the principle of self-justification. The human conscience makes this inevitable. Paul is a rich example of the dynamic of justification by grace. Such justification releases him to true understanding of law, and the way in which grace liberates man from Adamic bondage to sin and death, into life and liberty. Augustine found release into life through this very epistle, especially through 13:11-14. Luther was not only liberated from his exercises of self-justification, but his change of understanding brought transformation to his own age. Indeed, it set the course—fairly speaking—for the outworking of modern Western history. In the preface to his own commentary on Romans, Luther wrote:

This epistle represents the fundamental teachings of the New Testament, and is the purest Gospel, well worthwhile not only to be memorised verbatim but also so to be used daily by every Christian as the daily bread of his soul. For no one could ever exhaust this epistle by study and meditation. The better one becomes acquainted with it, the higher one will treasure it, and all the more delight in it

Much of the social and moral change in England can be attributed to the Wesleyan and Evangelical Revivals of the 18th and 19th centuries. John Wesley records in his Journal for May 14th, 1738:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, London where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Romans. About a quarter before nine while he [Luther] was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ—Christ alone—for salvation, and assurance was given

me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more special manner despitely used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now felt for the first time in my heart.

No one who has studied the change that Wesley's Methodism made to England can come to any other conclusion than that the power of the gospel—as set out in the Epistle to the Romans brought a dynamic change to the British Isles. Lecky, the historian, is reported to have said that but for the Wesleyan and Evangelical Revival, England would have known a bloodbath even worse than that of the French Revolution. In this—and other ways—we can sense the enormous moral dynamic that lies within the realm of grace, especially as experienced in the Epistle to the Romans.

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his foreword to Robert Haldane's *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Banner of Truth Trust, Great Britain, 1963) speaks of the impact Haldane made when he went to Switzerland in 1816 at the age of fifty. In Geneva he came into contact with a number of students training for the ministry. Lloyd-Jones narrates:

They were all blind to spiritual truth but felt much attracted to Haldane and to what he said ... one by one they were converted and their conversion led to a true revival of religion, not only in Switzerland, but also in France. They [the students] included such men as Merle D'Aubigne the writer of the classic *History of the Reformation*, Fredric Monod who became the founder of the Free Churches in France, Bonifas who became a theologian of great ability, Louis Gausson the author of

Theopneustia, a book of inspiration of the Scriptures, and Cesar Malan. There were also others who were greatly used of God in the revival.

AUTHORSHIP, OCCASION AND DATE OF WRITING

Probably no scholar debates the idea that the author of the Epistle was St. Paul. From Acts 21:39 we gather that Paul was born at Tarsus. Tarsus was a city of Greek culture. It was also a colony city of Rome, i.e. those born in it were by birth Roman citizens, i.e. free persons no matter what their ethnic origins. Known as Saul, the young man grew up in this city, but in fact had his education in Jerusalem, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Rabban Gamaliel was one of the most outstanding of Rabbinic teachers. He is mentioned in Acts 5:34-39, where he seems benign enough, although we do not have other proof of this disposition.

Paul was a zealous young man, quickly outstripping his contemporaries in knowledge, keenness, and action. If we read biographical elements given in Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9: 1 ff., I Corinthians 15:9, Galatians 1: 13; and Philippians 3:6, then we can gather that he saw—as a Jew—the immense danger the new faith of the Christians posed to orthodox Judaism. As we have said above, Paul received a dynamic revelation of Christ, for nothing else would have sufficed to bring him to be a worshipper of Christ.

Paul was at Damascus when the revelation broke through fully to him, and because he immediately preached Jesus as the Son of God, i.e. the Messiah, he was in danger and had to be lowered over the wall of the city to escape in darkness. We do not know how long he was in Arabia—close by—but he must have shortly returned, ministered again in Damascus, and then three years later gone up to Jerusalem (Galatians

1:17-18). In Acts we can follow his history—first returning to Tarsus from Jerusalem, then called to Antioch in Syria, being sent from there, with Barnabas, on his first missionary journey, and after that journey returning for ministry to Asia Minor and then on to Europe.

We need not, here, fill out his life story, but in Acts 18 we read of Paul's first visit to Corinth. His visits to the synagogue on the Sabbaths and his proclamation there, of the gospel caused a church to spring to life from some of the people of that synagogue. The Jews who refused to believe in Jesus as Messiah strongly opposed him and his converts, but in accordance with a vision of the Lord, Paul stayed on for some 18 months, teaching the word of God, and eventually returned to Jerusalem. On his final missionary journey—as recorded in Acts—Paul returned to Greece where he spent 3 months (Acts 20:3). His final return to Jerusalem resulted in his being placed in custody, and the long epic of his being brought to trial before Caesar in Rome.

It is generally believed—and even accepted—that Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome from Corinth the time being in or about January to March 55 A.D. His letter speaks of his hope of coming to them as he hoped to journey on to Spain (1:8-15; 15:22-25).

THE PRIMARY THEME OF THE EPISTLE

The book has been divided into three sections, the first being chapters 1-8, the second 9-11, and third 12-15. They teach righteousness, as follows:

(i) Chapters 1-8 certainly deal with God's justifying righteousness, i.e. God justifies the ungodly—through the propitiatory sacrifice of His Son, the heart of which is 3:19-31—i.e. 'justified by his grace as a gift'.

(ii) Chapters 3:9-11 deal with God's *universal righteousness*. i.e. His establishment of righteousness among the nations, by means of the Gospel, this involving the whole matter of election.

(iii) Chapters 12-15 deal with what we call practical righteousness, i.e. God's sanctifying power which works in the life of the church and of each member of it, bringing each member into living righteously in the practice of life.

We will need to understand 'the righteousness of God' not merely as adherence to law as a block of legislation, but as the true way of life (cf. Psalms 1, 19 and 119), involving justice, and the mercy of God, and ultimately issuing—through justification and sanctification—in the true community which lives in recognisable righteousness.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE WHOLE BOOK

An Introduction to the Theme and Subjects of the Book

THE MAIN THEME

It has been said by man that the primary theme of the epistle is 'The Righteousness of God'. The text of the Letter has then been divided into three sections, as follows:

- a) Chapters 1 to 8, God's justifying righteousness;
- b) Chapters 9 to 11, God's righteousness with the nations and history;
- c) Chapters 12 to 15, God's practical righteousness in the life of the church.

This division is approximately correct, and we will follow these divisions in our overall view of the text.

THE VALUE OF AN OVERALL VIEW OF THE EPISTLE

It is imperative to have a scan of the book before seeking to understand its details. This bird's-eye perspective helps us to better understand the arguments Paul is placing before us.

ROMANS CHAPTERS ONE TO EIGHT

Chapter One

Verses 1 to 7

Paul greets the church at Rome. He has not been there prior to writing this Letter. In verses 1-7 he conveys this greeting, which states his authority in the church of Christ. It is that of an apostle. He has not chosen this office, but has been called by God, hence he rests on that authority and obeys it. In speaking of Christ's standing with God the Father—whose Son is Christ Himself—Paul affirms that his calling has come through this Messiah and so is authoritative. Paul himself has not been called to be an apostle as such, but to be an apostle with a view to bringing about the obedience of the nations to the Messiah. In this spirit he warmly greets the brethren at Rome and invokes—from God and Christ—the apostolic blessing of peace and grace.

Verses 8 to 15

Paul warmly praises the church at Rome, saying their faith is known universally. He has long had a desire to come to them, and hopes this may happen shortly. He wants to impart some spiritual gift to them, and to receive strengthening from them. The only reason—to date—for his not coming has been delay by circumstances. He wants to preach Christ in Rome, for, in fact, he always feels under a debt—compulsion to preach the gospel to all—the Jews, Greeks and barbarians.

Verses 16 to 17

These two verses set out Paul's confidence in the gospel, and are pivotal for his whole argument of God's righteousness. He is not ashamed of the gospel, for it reveals (i) God's special righteousness, and (ii) this

righteousness is the power of God to save sinful man. (Paul will open up the special righteousness in 3:21-31). In these two verses he is saying that by faith a person is justified or saved.

Verses 18 to 32

The conjunction 'for' sets out all that follows. Paul is saying the gospel is the power of God, and showing that it is necessary since man is under wrath. Thus the argument begun here concludes only at 3:3 1. (After 3:3 1 it is supported in many ways in chapters 4 to 8).

In this passage Paul is showing (i) God's wrath is upon all sinners, and (ii) that this is because they have rejected God, followed idolatry, and set up their own system of worship. The results of this rebellion are shown (a) in God *giving man up* to his own evil (vv. 24f , 26f , and 28f), and (b) in the dreadful consequences of being given up, i.e. man's deterioration and judgement-suffering.

Chapter Two

Verses 1 to 11

In this section Paul senses that all Jews will agree with him in what he has said in 1: 18-32, but will apply it only to the Gentiles. He warns Jewish readers that they, in fact, are under the same judgement. It is the attitude of mind and heart, and the actions one does, which qualify men for judgement or 'glory, immortality and eternal life'.

Verses 12 to 24

Paul continues his argument, but says it all has to do with law. The one who obeys law is the one who will be seen as righteous. If the Jews have the law and do not obey it, then they are under judgement. If the

Gentiles—by nature—obey the law, then they are a law unto themselves, i.e. as obedient to law.

It is foolish for Jews to condemn Gentiles when, *in essence*, they do what Gentiles do when they sin. In one sense it is more evil for Jews to do such sins, since they boast they do not.

Verses 25 to 29

Paul pursues his Jew-Gentile argument further. He insists that, in essence, circumcision is a spiritual matter. True circumcision is of the heart, and not merely of the flesh. The person who has heart circumcision must be treated as a true Jew, God's accepted person.

Chapter Three

Verses 1 to 4

Paul anticipates, perhaps, an outraged Jew asking what is the point of being a Jew if a Gentile can virtually be one through circumcision of the heart. His answer is that the benefits of being a Jew by blood are great. In this realm of covenant alone are the truths of God present. It may be true that many a Jew has been unrepentant, and even apostate, but does that invalidate the Jewish (covenantal) thing? Indeed not. God is not justified by Jewish obedience or unjustified by Jewish disobedience.

Verses 5 to 18

Paul's argument now closes in, as he seeks to convict Jewish readers of their own sinfulness. He says that if Jews sin then God is right to judge them. If God is not allowed to judge the Jew, then how can He judge the world? He sets aside a foolish argument that a Jew by sinning might be doing God's truthfulness a good turn by showing a contrast between sin

and God's truth!

He now rounds off his argument by saying that all mankind—Jews and Greeks—are under the power of sin. In verses 10-18 he gives references from the Hebrew Scriptures regarding the practical sinfulness of man. These are conclusive.

Verses 19 to 26

What Paul foreshadowed in 1:16-17 he now reveals, namely, the special righteousness of God which justifies sinners who have faith in Christ. He shows two righteousnesses of God, (i) the righteousness of God revealed by the law He has given, and (ii) that righteousness which justifies the sinner. The basis of the latter is the death of the Cross—here called 'propitiation'.

This righteousness is God's grace, that having wrought propitiation through His Son on the Cross, God now justifies (believing) man. In doing so, He vindicates Himself and His righteousness, showing that He never really passed over sins.

Verses 27 to 31

Paul knows his ideas will seem radical and innovative, but he shows that far from justifying grace going contrary to the law (i.e. being illegal), it is the very grace which upholds the law. The principle is now established that both Jew and Gentile—since both are sinners—can be justified by God's grace when received by faith. This is what serves to uphold the law.

Chapter Four**Verses 1 to 8**

Probably because Paul's ideas may seem radical to a Jewish reader, Paul sets out to seat the matter of grace back in the history of God's covenant with Abraham and Israel. To show that justification is of grace, he quotes Genesis 15:6 to demonstrate that Abraham was justified by faith. He also quotes David in Psalm 32:1-4, and concludes that in neither case was the person justified by anything but grace (faith).

Lest any Jew might rest his trust for justification in circumcision (the sign of covenant), Paul shows Abraham was justified before circumcision, circumcision being a sign and seal of that grace.

Verses 9 to 25

Paul pursues his argument, saying that God's promise to Abraham and his descendants was prior to law, and not dependent upon it. If in any way it was to do with law (circumcision), then grace would be made void. The promises of God to Abraham made him increasingly strong, and he believed God concerning Sarah having a child in her old age. This practical faith was not the cause of God's action, for that was His grace, but evoked by His promise.

Paul concludes this powerful argument by saying that what was reckoned for Abraham was not limited *to* Abraham, but it was as much for us who believe in Him (God) who raised from the dead our Lord Jesus, for His death was for our sins, and His resurrection for our forgiveness.

Chapter Five**Verses 1 to 5**

Paul now develops the idea and dynamics of Justification. Concluding that we are Justified by faith he says the outcome is (i) we have peace with God, (ii) we now stand continually in grace, and (iii) we have hope, i.e. of sharing in God's glory in the future.

Paul then shows this will involve a process of suffering by which we will be matured. We are not hopeless because we have already experienced the great manner of God's love being poured into the heart, and also the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 6 to 11

Paul amplifies the matter of God's love. This is shown in what he teaches, because (i) though we were utterly weak and ungodly Christ died for us, (ii) not when we were good or righteous but sinners, Christ died for us, (iii) this justification took place when we were enemies of God and so we have been saved from wrath (i.e. through propitiation). The outcome of this great love is that 'we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ'.

Verses 12 to 21

In this section Paul takes up the principle of the solidarity of the human race. The whole race is in Adam, so that what he did is what the race did. Through this first man sin and death came into human affairs, not having been there hitherto. He sinned: it sinned. He sinned and death came upon him and the whole human race. There is another man—Jesus—and he parallels Adam, but the contrast is powerful. Because of Adam many (all men) died, and will die. Because of Christ all in Christ will live. Sin brought that death to the race, but the

obedience (of Christ) brought life to it. Death—through sin—reigned over man, and sin also reigned by death, but the abundance of grace in Christ causes man to reign in life.

Thus Paul is saying that as the sin of one (Adam) led all men into condemnation, so the obedience of one (Christ) leads all men who are in Christ to acquittal from condemnation, and so free of judgement.

Paul knows that the law will always figure highly with the Jewish mind and says that death for Adam's sin had nothing to do with the (Jewish) law as such. The law came to increase the activity of sin, i.e. sin increased by the law, but grace is vastly more abundant than sin and its condemnation. Grace is overwhelmingly more powerful than condemnation.

Chapter Six

Verses 1 to 11

Here Paul says that even though grace over-abounds the reality of sin (with condemnation and judgement present because of sin), yet no one should seek to sin so that grace may abound! Union with Christ in baptism meant a certain participation in Christ's Cross, His death and His burial, as indeed, also, His resurrection. To do sin is unthinkable for the believer. Knowing our co-crucifixion (i.e. with Christ) we not only reject foolish sinning, but we recognize that now we are regarded as crucified, dead, buried and risen again, the fullness of which still lies in the future.

Paul then says that since Christ died to sin, and now lives to God, so we are counted the same. That is, as He died once to sin and lives to God, we must reckon we are as Him—dead to sin and alive to God, but of course only in Christ.

Verses 12 to 14

Paul has said sin has ceased to have power because as seen in 6:7, we have been justified from sin's, i.e. its power-through-guilt has been broken. We now know we do not have to obey sin, mainly because we are not under (the guilt of) the law, but are under (the liberation of) grace.

Verses 15 to 23

Paul now enters upon the matter of the will operating where grace works. All grace's accomplishments are complete, but the one for whom grace has come must respond and utterly yield to the teaching and to righteousness. It is a principle—Paul points out—that man is a slave to one or another, i.e. to sin or to God. If one has yielded his members to iniquity which thus compounds itself, so he can yield himself to righteousness which brings practical holiness. The outcome of yielding to sin is death, whilst yielding to life climaxes in holiness and eternal life.

Chapter Seven

Verses 1 to 6

Paul now returns to the manner of law, particularly for his Jewish readers. He states that the law is binding on a person all his life: only death releases him from it. He says—in effect—that marriage is binding, and only the death of the other spouse releases the married person. Paul calls this 'the law concerning her husband'. The wife is released from the husband if he dies.

The imagery does not fit completely. Paul says that a believer dies to the law through the death of Christ. (The law cannot touch a dead person, cf. Rom. 6 :7, 10). Even so, that death is with a view to the person being

married to another husband, i.e. Christ, and marriage is with a view to fruitfulness. The old husband has gone and a new spouse has come. The old relation to law is not as the new relation to Christ, but one now serves 'Christ and his law' in the 'new life of the Spirit'.

Verses 7 to 12

Paul now discusses law because the Jew holds the law in high regard. He shows that sin uses the law to incite a man to sin. In fact, it uses the commandments to deceive a person and so brings him into active sinning. The commandments were never intended for sin and death, but now become this for the sinner. Yet they must be maintained—Paul points out that the law is holy, and its commandments holy, just and good.

Verses 13 to 25

Paul says the law cannot be accused of being evil. Whilst sin uses it deceptively, so it (the law) also exposes sin for what it is when it (sin) works through the law to incite further acts of sin. This is a triumph over sin, for it is now seen as sin, deceptive though it is.

Paul now commences his examination of what he is. He is one who sees the law as spiritual, whilst he is carnal, i.e. weak in himself. He delights in the law of God, wishes to do good, but finds that he cannot do good of his own will, nor desist from sin of his own will. Sin within him is stronger—of itself—than he is of himself.

He discovers an unchangeable principle: every time he seeks to do good, sin is immediately and powerfully present to prevent him. This law never changes. The law of his mind—intention to do good and desist from evil—is not as powerful as the principle (law) of sin which is ever present—dynamically—in his members.

Paul cries out, asking who will deliver him from his deathful body. He says that the day will come when this will take place, through God and Christ.

He thus sums up the situation as follows: 'I know that with the will of my mind I serve God's law, but in my weak humanity I am conscripted to serve sin.'

Chapter Eight

Verses 1 to 4

Whatever he has said in previous chapters he now has an unequivocal statement, namely, 'There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'. That is, through the Cross the legal condemnation has gone. The gospel ('the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus') has triumphed over 'the law of sin and death', i.e. the law of God which condemns sinners to death when it is broken. God—in Christ—has judged sin by the Atonement in Christ's death.

The aim and goal of this act of God is that the regenerate people of God should fulfil the true demands of God's law. Such people walk in the Spirit, and not in the flesh.

Verses 5-8

Paul takes up the idea of flesh, i.e. fallen humanity which is inherently rebellious and incorrigible. It never submits to God's law, so that all in the flesh—fallen and unredeemed humanity—can never please God.

Verses 9 to 13

Paul points out that when Christ's Spirit dwells in one, then that person is not in the flesh. The guarantee of resurrection is the indwelling of the Spirit—the Holy Spirit—who raised Jesus from the dead. His presence is our assurance that He will also raise us. If the Spirit were not indwelling then there would be no hope for the resurrection of the body.

Verses 12 to 14

Because the Spirit is in us, and because we are not doomed to the death that the fallen flesh of man anticipates, we have no obligation—legal or psychological—to be subject to the sinful flesh. Indeed, when our wills insist on living in accordance with the Spirit, then life comes to us. The Spirit is there to lead the sons of God in all things.

Verses 15 to 17

Paul now shows the fact of adoption or the gift of sonship. The Spirit in us gives us our knowledge and sense of sonship, enabling us to cry, 'Abba!', which means 'Father!' The Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, and this means we are fellow heirs with God's Son. The inheritance that is to come to us calls for present persistence in the face of suffering, but the outcome will be this priceless inheritance. This will be our coming glorification fully into the image of God.

Verses 18 to 25

We may have to suffer—by nature of the case—but the outcome will be wonderful. Now that Paul has cleared the matter of law and death finally, he turns to the matter of future life. Having already said that believers are people of hope, he turns to the goal of hope—the

glorification of man and the creation. This glorification must—for some undisclosed reason—be preceded by suffering.

The creation—seemingly by the curse—has been subjected to futility or emptiness, but this was done in hope, i.e. the creation looks forward to the ultimate fulfilment, when it—along with the children of God—will be liberated from the bondage of corruption to total liberty. In this hope the believer lives. If all were fulfilled then there would be nothing to yet hope for; but there is!

Verses 26 to 30

Until the time of its fulfilment—glorification—all creation groans, and is in a form of convulsion, even those who have the Spirit and His firstfruits. In this bewildering time believers do not know what to pray for, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession within them with unuttered groanings. God hears and heeds such intercession.

The believer might think a time of convulsion bodes ill, but Paul reassures Him that in everything God is working for the good of the ones who love Him. These are called according to His purpose which is irreversible. Long ago—before time—God foreknew His elect and predestined them to become like His Son, and already in His plan such have been glorified.

Verses 31 to 39

Keeping in mind the disturbing matter of convulsions, suffering, and human weakness, the spirit of the believer might become crushed, thinking it stands no hope in the face of everything. For such persons Paul has great comfort. He says (i) since God gave up everything in

Christ when He abandoned Him up to the death of the Cross, surely He then gives all things—with, and in Christ—so that we have no need of fear, (ii) accusation will come to us from evil (persons or powers) but God refutes such false condemnation. He, Himself, has already justified us, and (iii) Christ has not only died for us but has risen and is seated in the place of authority—God’s right hand—and here he intervenes (i.e. intercedes, for us against the accusers).

Paul sees that the aim of evil is to separate the elect from the love of Christ—this great and powerful new factor the justified sinner has come to know, He speaks realistically of all the things that oppose the believer, for each day he faces death. He is, however, convinced that nothing—absolutely nothing—is competent or powerful enough to separate God’s people ‘from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

Thus, in eight chapters, Paul has covered the whole matter of God’s justifying righteousness—that righteousness which sets men free from the guilt, power and pollution of sin, justifies him from judgement, and opens the door to pursue practical holiness, as also to anticipate future, wonderful glorification.

Chapter Nine

Verses 1 to 5

We might think that Paul, in tussling with obstinate Jewish hearers, has rejected his own people. To the contrary, his heart is always with them. He avers that the Holy Spirit bears witness to a pure conscience in him in his sorrow for his own people. He would be accursed for them—were that possible—if only his being cut off would bring them to redemption.

He then speaks of the great gifts Israel was given in its sonship of God, gifts which are peerless, if truly known.

Verses 6 to 13

Paul now undertakes a difficult task—to explain the seeming rejection by Israel of their Messiah, and the seeming rejection of them—Israel—by God. He explains, as he has in some measure explained before, that not every blood descendant of Israel is a Jew according to election. It may seem that God’s word has failed, i.e. the word of promise, but when we examine it closely, when Abraham was promised his seed would be blessed, then those of Hagar’s seed—Ishmael and his descendants were both directly included. Of Isaac’s two sons, Esau was rejected and Jacob accepted that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his (God’s) call.

Verses 14 to 18

Paul says that such may seem to be injustice on God’s part, but God’s sovereign choice cannot be prompted by anything, or even have to act in conformity with human ideas of justice. Paul concludes that God has mercy on whom He chooses and hardens those whom He chooses.

Verses 19 to 29

Paul now argues that God is so sovereign that nothing has the fight to argue with Him. Somehow His wrath on certain ‘vessels’ shows the greatness of His mercy, where He has other ‘vessels’ which He prepared beforehand to delineate His mercy. Certainly Paul is thinking of some Jews who were sure their very being as Israelites in some way entitled them to be ‘vessels’ of mercy. He shows—against this—that God had

also planned mercy upon (elect) Gentiles. He quotes from Hosea, a passage where those seemingly rejected by Him will be called ‘my beloved’ and ‘sons of the living God’.

He then takes up the Old Testament doctrine of the holy remnant i.e. that only some of Israel will be saved. Indeed, he quotes Isaiah as inferring that all Israel could have been erased, but the mercy of the Lord left this remnant.

Verses 30 to 33

Paul draws this difficult argument to a conclusion. He says, ‘Do we think that the Gentiles who never pursued righteousness—as Israel is purported to have pursued it—have been given righteousness through faith (justification), but Israel who did pursue righteousness by the law was (unfairly) rejected?’ His answer is that this is not the case. Had Israel not merely had a mindset of law, but of faith then it would, also, have achieved justification. The Old Testament constantly places emphasis on belief as against ‘works’.

Chapter Ten

Verses 1 to 4

Paul repeats his yearning for Israel, mainly that they be saved. He insists that they have a zeal for God, possibly quoting Proverbs 19:2 (N.I.V.) ‘It is not good to have zeal without knowledge’. This is the state of Israel. They insist they can establish their own righteousness. (We notice that Paul has returned, briefly, to his argument of Romans chapters 2 and 3).

He then makes the powerful point that Christ is the end of the law, so that everyone who has faith may be justified. He means Christ has put

an end to law forever as being the way to justification. He does not mean Christ ends the law.

Verses 5 to 13

Paul is saying that salvation seems too high an attainment—one would have to work hard—that the Jew would seek to do something special in works righteousness. That is the ‘law-way’ as against the ‘faith-way’. (Notice Paul never says the law was a way of attaining righteousness, for the O.T. never states such a principle).

The man finding the saving word difficult will talk of ascending into heaven to bring Christ down, or descending into the abyss (shades of death), to bring Christ up. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 30:12-14 to show that what Moses said is still true, i.e. ‘The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart’. This is not an attained word: it is a proclaimed word.

The substance of the word is confession with the lips that Christ is Lord, and belief in the heart that He has been raised from the dead. How simply, then, Paul shows the two principles in the Old Testament, namely (i) believing in Him, and (ii) calling upon His name for salvation. This is how it is now, also.

Verses 14 to 21

It is this word—believing it and calling upon God—that occupies Paul. He says that men are to call on God, but not until they hear His (gospel) word will they call. So a preacher has to come, but he must be sent. If he is sent then he must be listened to, for this word brings faith to birth, and God has sent the preacher. Listening is both obligatory and saving. It is the ‘word of Christ’, i.e. (i) the word of the gospel of Christ and (ii)

the word Christ has given.

Paul then asks whether, in fact, the word has been proclaimed and says it has, and universally. He does not say whether it was told to all the world by the apostolic messengers or in the way of another (complementary), proclamation (cf. Psalm 19 here quoted). He does say that in love God has opened His arms to a ‘disobedient and contrary people’, i.e. Israel, and is not accepted.

Chapter Eleven

Verses 1 to 6

The question uppermost in some Jews’, thinking must have been, ‘Has God rejected Israel?’ It would seem to be so, but Paul returns to the doctrine of the holy remnant, saying first that he is a Jew who has been saved (by the gospel). He then quotes Elijah who, in despair, once thought he was the only truly loyal servant of God when there were others who constituted the holy remnant.

Paul says this remnant is purely by grace. *All the gospel has to be grace!*

Verses 7 to 24

The apostle now reveals something of an important nature. He points out that the Gentiles (the nations) have been included through the rejection of (and by) Israel. If Israel’s rejection means the Gentiles’ inclusion in salvation, then the (future) acceptance of (and by) Israel will mean ‘life from the dead’, i.e. not merely spiritual or physical resurrection for Israel, but a most extraordinary revival of the human race, both of Jews and Gentiles!

He then proceeds to show that God in His sovereignty has broken the domestic branch (Israel) from the domestic olive tree, and has included the wild olive branch (the Gentiles) in that tree. Gentiles must not become boastful or careless. God can break off that lately engrafted branch also!

At first sight Paul seems to say the domestic branch—broken off—will be re-engrafted. In fact, he says ‘if they do not persist in their unbelief, (they) will be grafted in (again!)’.

Verses 25 to 36

The apostle develops the theme of Israel being restored (i.e. re-engrafted) by saying he wants them to understand a mystery, namely (i) ‘a hardening has come upon a part of Israel until the full number of the Gentiles comes in’, and (ii) ‘and so all Israel will be saved’. This will be only on the basis of belief and the new covenant, i.e. the forgiveness of their sins.

At the moment, for the sake of the church, those of Israel after the flesh are enemies of God, but because of the promises given to the patriarchs—i.e. God’s election of grace—they are beloved of God. Paul insists that the ‘gifts and the call of God are irrevocable’. The Gentiles—the nations of disobedience against God—received mercy in being grafted into the domestic tree, though undeserving.

Paul’s logical (or theological) conclusion is brilliant and humbling—‘For God as consigned all men to disobedience that he may have mercy upon all’—but none of these elect is deserving by works. Only covenant grace and responsive faith bring the elect to be part of His people.

Paul is swept up with amazed joy and wonder at the incredible wisdom of God, and bursts into doxology. The tenor of verses 33 to 36 is self evident, but his conclusion makes God to be all-in- all— 'FOR FROM HIM, AND THROUGH HIM AND IN HIM ARE ALL THINGS'.

Chapter Twelve

Verses 1 to 2

On the basis of the preceding eleven chapters of the Letter, dealing as they have with God's mercies, Paul calls for his readers to present their bodies to God as a living sacrifice. Only grace can grip and move them to do this. Whilst the world would shape them into its mindset and actions, they must—in fact—be transformed from within, and by their actions test and know the perfect will of God, i.e. as they carry it out. This constitutes true spiritual worship (service).

Verses 3 to 8

Paul enters, now, into the manner of life they are to carry out in the church—the body of Christ. He only advises out of the grace given to him, as he teaches them—perhaps afresh—the fact of the body of Christ (the church), and gifts given to it for mutual living and upbuilding. Each member must remain humble, for God provides not only the gifts but faith to exercise them. Grace bestows the gifts and the given faith enables them to be used as they ought to be.

Verses 9 to 13

The positive life of believers is set out beautifully, and is not confined to mere functional use of gifts. The life of the body is warm and loving, and serving is its keynote.

Verses 14 to 21

None of God's people ought to take offence at persecution, but see it as an occasion to show love. This love should bring harmony both within the body (the church) and outside of it, Peace with all is the theme of living. The urge to avenge oneself should be set aside. God—the God of justice—will do that! The believer must not interfere with God's justice by carrying out some of his own!

Chapter Thirteen

Verses 1 to 7

Paul now develops his principle of obedience to 'the governing authorities'. God has set the authorities in power, and believers should obey them—even though they may not be 'Christian'. The judgements and discipline they bring upon members of the church should be accepted. Taxes should be paid, and the authorities respected. Paul does not enter into questions generally raised regarding such authorities.

Verses 8 to 10

Paul sees the highest demand for mutual living is to love one another. He insists that all the commandments of the Decalogue—the so-called 'Ten Commandments—constitute practical active love. He does not include the first two commandments which are towards God.

Verses 11 to 14

The apostle brings upon them the urgency of the hour. Believers are to have nothing to do with the works of darkness, for their salvation is near. They must be clothed with the armour of light, reject fleshly pleasure and strife, and make no provision for the flesh. All of this is preparation for the consummation of their salvation.

Chapter Fourteen**Verses 1 to 4**

Paul introduces another theme of practical righteousness, namely the care for the weak in faith. In I Corinthians chapter 8, Paul speaks similarly of the weak in conscience. The so-called stronger brethren ought not to pass judgement on these weaker brethren in what they eat or do not eat, do or do not do.

Verses 5 to 12

The apostle continues, saying that when a person honours one day more than another but sees it as honouring the Lord, then he must be allowed to do so without criticism. A general principle for all believers is that they live to the Lord and they die to the Lord, since it was for this reason Christ died and lived again—to be Lord over all things. We will all—whether weak or strong—have to give an account to God for all our actions.

Verses 13 to 23

The argument continues, namely that no—one should pass judgement on another, thus not causing another to trip and stumble. Nothing of itself is unclean, but if it seems unclean to another (i.e. weaker) brother, then it is best to abstain. To walk in love is to refuse to injure another.

Paul puts it plainly that the Kingdom of God is not primarily arguments over this or that, but ‘righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’. We ought, positively therefore, to pursue the things of peace and harmony. One may well be strong in faith, but not exhibit that to men but to God. The weak person must do what he thinks he ought to do. He can only proceed as far as the faith he can exercise.

Chapter Fifteen**Verses 1 to 13**

Paul continues the matter of the weaker brother. If we are strong, then it is all the more reason why we should seek to please the brother and build him up. Christ did not please himself. Indeed he became a servant to serve both Israel by confirming the promises given to the patriarchs, and, as a servant, to serve the Gentiles also, since the promises of God also included the revelation of the gospel to them.

In this passage Paul twice invokes blessings upon the brethren at Rome, praying in particular for warm harmony to be amongst them.

Verses 14 to 21

This passage is very powerful. It speaks of the apostle’s ministry in his proclamation of the gospel, the grace of God given which called him to it, and enabled him in it, and then the modes and principles by which he preached. He also speaks of the extent of the ministry both in fruits and the geographical coverage of it. In his travels and ministry he had often wished to include Rome, but never sought to build where another man had laid the foundations. He wished to break new ground continually.

Verses 22 to 33

Paul speaks in particular of his intention to come to Rome. Even then it will be as he goes through on his way to Spain. He is seeking to take the offertory given for the needy saints in Jerusalem, remarking that it is fitting for the Gentiles, who had received such blessing from the gospel to think of their Jewish brethren.

With some kind of prescience Paul asks for their prayers that nothing wrong may happen at Jerusalem when he arrives there. He wishes to be

delivered from unbelievers who would do him harm.

Chapter Sixteen

Verses 1 to 16

Paul—in closing—gives detailed greetings from those with him to those in Rome. It is apparent that Paul writes from the midst of a warm, busy and living community. He also writes to such a community—hence the interchange of greetings.

Verses 17 to 23

The apostle writes feelingly regarding those who create dissensions, opposing the true apostolic doctrine, and who are in fact, fleshly. By these means Satan will be crushed under the feet of the faithful brethren. Paul also includes more greetings in this section.

Verses 25 to 27

Paul closes with a reiteration of one of his great themes, namely, the nations—through the proclamation of the gospel—coming to obey Christ. He began the Letter with this in mind, and concludes it thus. He then closes with an ascription of praise to God.

STUDIES ON ROMANS

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDIES

The Reason for Our Studies in Romans

In this Series we hope to cover those issues of the Gospel which will constitute a review of the nature of the Gospel, and help us to see its wholeness, why it inspired Paul to travel and proclaim it incessantly, and so come to understand it that we will have a like passion for it, coming to comprehend how this Epistle covers the elements of universal human depravity, the wrath of God upon its evil, the liberation from wrath and judgement by the propitiatory act of the Cross, and the liberation from the law's condemnation to move out in the justification God has given, and to know the liberation from sin, to have power over it, and to know the sanctification God has provided in the gospel and so experience holiness of life.

We will then delve into the conflict in the Christian life which comes as we would be obedient to the law, the power that sin seeks to exercise in that struggle and the freedom of practical holiness we come to know through the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of our Sonship of the Father and the inheritance we will have as sons, will lead us to see more elements of life in the Spirit, such as intercessory prayer, predestination and election and the assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God.

We will then see Paul's idea of the obedience of faith as it relates to Israel and the church, the way of worship and holiness of life, the fullness of love in interpersonal community relationships, and the inspiration to share the powerful gospel with the nations that they might come to the obedience of faith.

All of this will lift our eyes from personal navel gazing, from grieving concerning our innate sinfulness which manifests itself in our lives so that we come to see that the gospel is so structured as to ensure us that the basis of our faith is viable, the exercise of it brings ‘the joy of faith’, and to see that faith always has its eschatological look to the holy telos when the nations come to the obedience of faith, i.e. submission to Christ. It will release us from desiring experiences of spirituality which might seem to give us assurance that we are in the fullness of God’s Fatherhood, the fullness of Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit. We will realise that we have all of these in, by, and from the gospel, so that we are indeed justified by faith, sanctified by God, that we live the life of faith in practical holiness, and that our present is greatly strengthened by that which is yet to come.

All of this material lies within the Epistle to the Romans, but of course we will look at supportive and explanatory materials from other parts of Scripture when we feel that is needful and helpful.

We conclude then that a study of the text of Romans will bring great benefit to us.

2. A BRIEF STUDY GUIDE TO THE EPISTLE

Note: We will not have time to do a verse by verse exegesis and exposition. We will therefore select from the text that which we think helpful and pertinent to our situation, but the material below is not merely a guide to the contents of the Letter but to holistic impact that comes to all believers from the Epistle. We cannot be selective as to certain elements. Note: Much will depend on the opening up of the passages which will substantiate our faith and bring us into that exhortation which related to the sanctified life.

Chapters One to Three

1: 1-15. The Christological basis for the gospel, Christ Son of God and Lord by his death and resurrection: Paul’s apostolic authority and ministry are to come now to Rome.

1:16-17. No need to be ashamed of the gospel because its basis is faith. It is as simple as having faith in God and this means bringing Man to righteousness.

1: 16-32. The reason for, and the nature of God’s wrath, something we must know for ourselves. The universal depravity of man.

2:1-3:19. Both Jews and Gentiles are to be accounted as depraved and so are accountable before God for his wrath and judgement.

3 -21-31. God’s grace shown in the propitiatory act of God in Christ which justifies the believing sinner on the basis of Christ’s work on the Cross. This gratuitous justification does no damage to the law, but substantiates it whilst setting the sinner free in conscience from its condemnation.

Chapter Four

1-23. The nature of faith which justifies in the cases of David and Abraham, based on the promises of God which issue from his nature.

24-25. As for Abraham, so for us; the death and resurrection of Christ ensure our justification— by faith.

Chapter Five

1-11. The outcome and fruits of justification. The dynamics of the new state of love, and the gift of reconciliation.

12-2 1. Sin and death through Adam from the beginning to the end are defeated by Christ as God’s grace to sinful man. The liberation is not meagre but abundant. Adam’s humanity is unholy, Christ’s the root and fruit of sanctification. We are aware, here, of two aeons, two systems.

Chapter Six

1-1. Being justified by faith might seem to be a status rather than a dynamic action which would be the root of holiness. Grace abounding liberates sinners from sin and death. This happens when a person is baptised into Christ. He/she goes down into Christ’s death and dies to the penalty of sin, is justified from sin. To die to sin is to live to God.

This is how the justified person must see it. Note: It is after this action of the gospel that sanctification is seen to be present and powerful. 12-23. Sin is powerless unless we give it power, but we present all we are to God as those who, by grace, have been released from sin's power. We choose either to be slaves to sin or righteousness. We, as believers, can only choose the latter. Submission to Christ/the gospel ('the form of teaching' NRSV) bring righteousness and, so, sanctification (cf. 6:22; 1 Tim. 2:15). As in 5:12-22 sin brought shame and death, now obedience (to Christ, the gospel) brings sanctification, and eternal life.

Chapter Seven

1-6. As in 3:31 we are now (afresh) faced with law. Law has to be considered. It is ever present. Yet as the law with penalty it brings no fruit (cf. Gal. 5:19-21), but only sins. In Christ's death the justified died to the law (Gal. 2: 19-20; cf. 5:24) and are free to be wedded to Christ for fruitfulness. The new era/aeon (5:12ff.) is that of the Spirit and so obedience to the law [as a **dynamic way** of life] is now operative.

7-12. An examination of law and sin using it dynamically, as a fulcrum to lever a person into sinning (cf., 7:5) is perceived. The law rightly promised life (Lev. 18:5) but sin used it deceptively. The law must, then we be seen as holy, just and good.

13-25. This working of sin through law will ever be in the believer who loves the law after his/her inner person. Sin *of itself*, is stronger than the believer *of his/her self*. Sin forces the hand of one whose mind is to do the good and desist from the evil. That is how it is. One who fights this battle this way (*of him/her self*) will always be exhausted and only relieved of the exhausting struggle in the *telos*. Seeing the ultimate release gives dynamic to persist in the present battling. The believer serves God in his mind/intention, but with the flesh (his innate weakness) serves sin which is stronger than him/her self

Chapter Eight

1-4. Whatever any case may be, this principle stands invincible, *there is no condemnation*. The justified person is set free from the law as 'the law of sin and death'. The law cannot effect 'serving in the new life of the Spirit' (7-6) but the Spirit can. Hence—because of the Spirit—the believer fulfils 'the righteous demand (*diakaioma*) of the law' (cf. Matt, 5:17-18; Gal. 5:22-23) This requires walking in the Spirit.

5-8. The flesh (the fallenness of man, humanity tainted by sin) is incorrigible. It can never obey God, indeed is ever hostile to him. To be in the flesh means one can never please God. Obeying his law pleases him!

9-13. Being in the Spirit is being in Christ. Thus the flesh has no hold on the believer who kills the [fleshly] 'deeds of the body' by him, the Spirit of Christ.

14-25. By the Spirit is sonship and sonship brings inheritance, which in turn is linked with (and is) glorification, albeit suffering is presently required. Inheritance involves ultimate glorification. Even with having the Spirit's first fruits, we groan for the day of liberation.

26-30. In the groaning, suffering time we need to pray, but are helpless. The Spirit does this by powerful, passionate internal intercession (cf. 8:34, Christ's twin intercession). So we are confident that all things are being worked by God for our own good—conformation. to the image of his Son for the 'liberty of the glory of the sons of God' (v. 21). God's act is fore-knowledge predestination, calling, conformation, and on this we rest.

31-39. God has justified and against all condemners, for this Christ died and has risen and incessantly intercedes at the Father's fight hand. This means nothing can separate the elect from God, his love in Christ is so strong and deep. Many powerful forces seek to do this, but in vain. We are stabilised and comforted by this knowledge.

CHAPTERS 9-11

These chapters are to show that God has sovereignly made no mistakes in history.

Chapter Nine

None of his promises to Israel is void. His principle of ‘I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion’ is inviolable, else were God not God. These recipients of mercy are not only Jews but Gentiles. Having faith is the response to hearing the gospel (cf. 10: 17).

Chapter Ten

The law presents itself but Christ is a that the law is about. The word which faith receives makes no law-performance demands. The word is wholly available to faith. The word is the gospel which is essential for calling on the Lord and being saved. Faith comes by hearing this ‘word of Christ’—Christ himself preaching the gospel through his *sent* messengers—but not all in Israel are hearing. This refusal is their culpable choice.

Chapter Eleven

There is yet a remnant of Israel who will hear. If others do not hear it is not because God’s intention (word) for Israel has failed, but the deliberate dullness of the [so-called] hearers. Even so, their refusal to hear has brought the gospel to the Gentiles. Their rejection has led to the Gentiles’ acceptance by God. The full story is not yet told. All Israel will be saved. God’s calling is without [his] recall of it. This wisdom of God in regard to Israel and the Gentiles is incredible. Hence a heartfelt doxology.

Chapter Twelve

1-2. Realising all these mercies (1:18-11:32) Paul exhorts his readers to a most significant action, that of presenting their bodies as a living

sacrifice for ‘understanding worship’. They are not to be [idol-worshippers] as the world about them, but renewal of the mind (by the Spirit?) is for them to be transformed. On this action all that follows in the chapter is dependent. It is the ‘spiritual worship, the transformed life, the true holiness’.

3-21. We can say that what follows in these verses is really an outworking of the true spiritual law of God as Israel had known it in worship of God, honouring of the neighbour, loving and caring for him in action, and not fighting the enemy with his own weapons, It reminds us of the Sermon on the Mount, especially the five (or six) antitheses which take us deep into the heart of true law.

Chapter Thirteen

1-10. These injunctions (paranetics) are the continuation of the way one lives in the transformed life, first towards the authorities God has set in the world and then the way in which the neighbour is to be treated and related to.

11-14. The holy life is always lived with the eschaton in view. If there has been any deviation *from* the transformed life then it must quickly be put aside. An awakening is due. No provision must be made for the flesh, and this can only be if we put on Christ.

Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen

14:1-15:13. This is really one section which, like I Corinthians chapter 8, deals with the weaker brethren, as the Corinthians chapter deals with the person of weak conscience. They are virtually the same. The way of love, the way of consideration for the weaker ones must be primary. Then will all members live in unity, in peace, in love. The great exemplar of such serving others is Christ, who became a servant firstly for the Jews and then for the conversion of the Gentiles. Faith aids the community to ‘abound in hope’.

15:14-31 covers the ministry Paul has had in serving all, especially the Gentiles, and the ministry he sees ahead of him. He gives the key to true

ministry and this information is valuable, but his passion is to preach the gospel to all. He also strongly emphasises the need for the collection of aid for the poor saints in Jerusalem. He appeals for the prayers of the Roman Christians for his ministry when he goes into Judea where danger certainly awaits him.

Chapter Sixteen

1-24. This section is filled with interesting material about his friends in Jerusalem, of which there are many. He recounts the ministries they have had and this account is valuable for us. He sends greetings and love.

25-27 takes up the theme of 'the obedience of faith' which he has touched on in 1:5 and 15:18. Certainly it is the key to his understanding of the Lordship of Christ and God's intention to gather in the nations under that Lordship.

3. CONCLUSION: WE ARE JUSTIFIED, SANCTIFIED, CALLED TO WORSE" AND SERVICE IN THE GOSPEL

If we are selective in the passages which help us to develop certain elements for their own sake, then we will miss the great thrust of the gospel of which Paul is not ashamed. It is not mere evangelism he is about, but 'the whole counsel of God'. Doubtless many of these elements are dealt with in greater length in some other Epistles, but if we simply make subjective demands in order to extend and fill out our own spirituality, then we will fail to be caught up in the wholesome and holistic dynamic; of the Epistle, which for Paul was true spirituality, if he could have used such a term.

A Useful Exercise

It would be helpful for all who undertake these Studies to sit down and write out what has come to you as you have traversed this Epistle. How has it come to you? Has it broadened your views of the extent of the gospel, and the great plan of God to bring all the nations to the obedience of faith? Would you say that in fact this is what the Letter is dealing with as a whole 'the obedience of faith'?