

which comes upon those who stand for the truth; 10) the book of Acts speaks about the importance of elders in the Lord's church; 11) the book of Acts speaks about the importance of preaching the pure and plain gospel of Christ; 12) Acts informs us of the purpose and nature of miraculous gifts in the early church; 13) Acts records the different modes of response that were given to the gospel by its hearers: some obeyed, some rebelled, others appeared indifferent; 14) Acts informs us of the martyrdom suffered by those who refused to refrain from Christian living and preaching Christ; 15) Acts depicts the zeal with which some will persecute the church; 16) Acts depicts the attempts of some to tamper with the gospel; 17) Acts depicts the gospel before all kinds of people: rich, poor, those in power, the educated of the day, those who were unlearned, et al.; 17) Acts informs us of the relationship of John's teaching and his baptism to that of Jesus the Christ; 18) Acts informs us of the providence of the Lord for those who seek to serve him faithfully; and 19) the book of Acts informs us of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

ROMANS

The book of Romans deals with a very important subject; that of the relationship between the gospel of Christ and the law of Moses, the relationship of Gentile and Jew. In this regard it is one of three books which have the same emphasis; Galatians and Hebrews being the remaining two. The extent to which the problem was discussed and dealt with is some indication of the gravity of "Judaising" teachers in the church of our Lord. This epistle was written to the church at Rome by Paul. At this time (i.e. the time of the writing of this letter), Paul had not yet been to the city of Rome (ch.1:8ff).

CHAPTER ONE

1. In the first few verses of this chapter (vs.1-7) Paul salutes the Christians at Rome and introduces himself. [NOTE the use of the term "obedience to the faith" in vs. 5.]
2. In the following section of the chapter (vs.8-15), Paul explains his appreciation for the church at Rome and makes reference to his hopes of visiting them in the future. He emphasizes that he is a debtor to the Greeks and the Barbarian, to the wise and the unwise. He is, therefore, willing to preach the gospel to all, even to them which are at Rome.
3. In what light did Paul view the gospel? He sets forth his classic understanding of this important facet of truth when he stated: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jews first, and also to the Greek." The word power in this verse is the same Greek word that the English word "dynamite" comes from. The theme of the book of Romans is summed up in this verse. The salvation which came through the gospel of Christ was for all men; both Jew and Gentile were included. Paul was a minister of that gospel. He was not ashamed of it. He willingly and lovingly proclaimed it unto all men. All those who were seeking to be righteous in the sight of God were justified by the gospel by faith.
4. The remainder of the first chapter of the book of Romans depicts the depths of depravity to which the Gentile world had fallen. The wrath of God was being revealed against them, and would be revealed against them, because they turned away from the Lord. Paul quite succinctly states that these Gentiles were without excuse in the sight of the Lord. They were given evidence through that which was manifest in them and through the witness of the things which are made. Rather than following after the ways of the Lord, they changed several things. They changed their concept of God from that which was/is incorruptible into the corruptible image of birds and beasts. They change the truth of God into a lie. They changed their own nature by involving themselves in wicked and perverted sexual relationships. Because of their iniquity, Paul says that God gave them up. They became "Godless" through their actions. Their sins are enumerated in the closing verses of the chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

1. The first section of this chapter (vs.1-9) speaks very directly to those who may have

been a bit too zealous to judge others. Paul noted that it is often the case that those who judge another, are often in the position of being guilty of the same offense as the person that they are judging. This does not, however, indicate that we can make no judgments of any kind. John 7:24 teaches that we must: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." What, then, is the distinction that is made in this passage and in Matthew 7:1? We are not to judge in such a way as to pass judgment or condemn anyone; that judgment belongs only to God. We are to judge between right and wrong, and we not only have the right, but also the obligation to inform people when they are wrong. We must be careful, however, to judge the rightness and wrongness of any action or situation, not by what we say, but by what the word of God says. It is not sinful for me to inform someone that they are involved in sin if the Bible so specifies that such is the case. These people (i.e. the ones of whom Paul was speaking in this chapter) were guilty of hypocritical judging.

2. Paul states by the Holy Spirit that God will render "to every man according to his deeds." God is the judge. To those who are faithful in seeking glory and honor (not selfishly, but spiritually) will be given eternal life. To those who are contentious and do not obey the truth, tribulation and anguish will come.
3. In the following section of this chapter (vs.10-16) Paul informs his readers that God is not any respecter of persons. Those who were without the law and those who were with the law shall be judged according to their deeds. "For as many as have sinned without law shall perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; ..."
4. In the final section of this chapter, Paul becomes much more specific in his address to those Jews guilty of sin (vs.17-29). Some of the Jews who taught the principles of the law were themselves guilty of the very things which they taught against. In so doing, these Jews blasphemed the name of God among the Gentiles. Being a Jew was no guarantee of salvation. John the Baptist informed the Jews that God could change stones into children of Abraham if he wanted to (Mt.3). The Jews developed the attitude that their heritage would save them, but Paul was writing to the Christians in Rome to inform them that this understanding was mistaken. Jews in the sight of God today are not outwardly and physically Jews, but they are Jews spiritually speaking. They must be Jews inwardly; circumcision is no longer of the flesh, but of the spirit, of the heart.

CHAPTER THREE

1. As this chapter begins Paul continues to discuss the part of the Jew in the plan of God's redemption. He opens by asking: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" He goes on to explain that there was an advantage and a profit in being a Jew, for it was to the Jews that the oracles (words) of God were committed. It was through the Jews that the Messiah, the Christ, was to come. The Jews were not left in complete darkness concerning this matter, for God chose to reveal it unto them at different times in the past through the prophets of Israel. Constant attention in the New Testament is drawn to the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. The Jews should have been aware of these teachings; God's teachings are true, not false!
2. In the second part of the chapter (vs.9-21), Paul begins to sum up the first two chapters. In chapter one he depicted the unrighteousness of the Gentile world. In chapter two and into chapter three he portrayed the unrighteousness of the Jews. The sum of this produced the realization that "there is none righteous, no not one." Every man standing on his own is unrighteous in the sight of God.
3. The concluding part of this chapter emphasizes: 1) that the Jews were not going to be saved by the law; 2) that the law brought a knowledge of sin; 3) that righteousness with God is attained by faith; 4) that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; 5) that justification is through the grace that is in Christ; 6) that Christ was a propitiation through his blood for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; and 7) that the law is established through faith.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. The fourth chapter continues the emphasis upon the salvation which is attained by faith. It must be remembered, however, that Paul is not seeking to maintain any dogma concerning "faith only", but that he is writing to show the proper relation of the law of Moses to the salvation which is in Christ Jesus. The Jews developed the idea that they would be alright by simply keeping the laws of Moses. Paul has already declared that "by the deeds of the law there shall be no flesh be justified in his sight." (Rom.3:20) As an illustration of an abiding principle in salvation, Paul turns to the life of Abraham, the father of the Jews (Jn.8). He emphasizes that Abraham was justified by his faith. He further emphasized that this sort of faith characteristic of Abraham was evidenced in his life prior to the time of circumcision. The references to works in this first section (vs.1-12) deal with the works of the law and the works of self-righteousness. This does not say however that Abraham's justification was possible without any works at all. If God commanded Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees, yet Abraham refused to go...would that have been obedience to the Lord's command? Of course not! His faith, then, was manifest through his obedience to the Lord's will! (cf. James 2)
2. In the following section of the chapter (vs.13-25) Paul emphasizes further the relationship between the law and the gospel by continuing to use Abraham as an illustration. The promise which was initially made to Abraham was made prior to the giving of the law (Gal.3). It was, therefore, in effect several hundred years prior to the law of Moses. If salvation came through the law, where, then, did that leave the promise of God to Abraham? It would leave it worthless! But Paul states that the promise was yet in affect. In order for that to be the case, the law must not have had any negative effect on the faith principle found within the covenant to Abraham. To maintain that the law made the Jews heirs of Abraham was tantamount to making the promise void. Salvation has always been through the means of grace and faith (cf. vs.16); grace on the part of God and faith on the part of man. Paul goes on in this chapter to show Abraham's faith as it concerned the promise of his son Isaac and emphasized that just as his faith was imputed for righteousness, so would ours be so imputed.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. This chapter begins to list the results and the consequences of the salvation which came through faith as opposed to the works of the law of Moses. Being justified by faith: 1) we have peace with God through Christ, 2) we have access into the grace of God, 3) we are able to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, 4) we are able to endure tribulations through patience, 5) we grow in experience and in hope, 6) etc. All of these results are due to the death of Christ, who died for the ungodly. God manifested his love toward mankind while man was yet in sin. The love which he has, therefore, for his own people (those who have been obedient to his will) is much more now that we are justified through the blood of Christ. That love is so much greater that Paul repeats the previous thought: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.
2. The last part of chapter five (vs.12-21) emphasizes the distinctions and the similarities between the first and the second Adam, that is Christ and Adam. Sin entered the world through one man, and death as a result of that sin. Death passed upon all men, not because of one man's sin, but rather because all have sinned. This section points out the influence of sin in the world and its greatness. Through one man sin came into the world, and all the world sinned of its own accord. The greatness of that sin, however, is overshadowed by the greatness of the grace of God which comes through one man. No matter how bad, or to what extreme Paul discusses sin, the grace of God is always greater than the greatest expanse of sin. Death reigned from Adam until Moses, but the law entered that sin might be made more evident to the sinner. But Paul continues to emphasize that where "sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Just as sin reigned unto death, grace reigns through righteousness toward eternal life in Jesus the Christ.

CHAPTER SIX

1. As Paul continues his discussion of the grace which is through the blood of Christ, he poses a question which may have been in the mind of his readers. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" The question was asked because Paul had just previously declared that wherever sin was, grace was much more abounding. The solution obvious to some would be: 1) if sin brings more grace, 2) we should engage in some sin so that 3) much more grace would abound. Paul states emphatically that such is not the way it should be! Those who are dead to sin should not live (continually practice) a life of sin any longer. Their death to sin came when they separated themselves from sin. They died to sin, were buried with Christ in baptism, and were raised up from the dead to walk in newness of life. This action/s typified the gospel of Christ (cf. I Cor.15:1-4). Paul, in that passage, states that the gospel of Christ, which saved those people obedient to it, consisted of 1) the death of Christ, 2) the burial of Christ, and 3) the resurrection of Christ. That gospel is obeyed in baptism into Jesus Christ (Rom.6:3).
2. Paul continues to point out that a follower of Christ, once obedient to baptism, is freed from sin. That person has crucified the old man of sin and begins to live a new life of righteousness. In this sense he is a new person.
3. The last section continues to point out that Christians are under grace and not under law (vs.14-23). That obedience is mandatory is pointed out in verse 16. Every person is either obedient to sin unto death or obedient unto the Lord which brings righteousness. Paul is thankful that many, who were obedient unto and therefore servants of sin, have now obeyed the "form of doctrine which was delivered you." That "form of doctrine" was, of course, the gospel of Christ (I Cor.15:1-4) and their obedience came when they were baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins (Rom.6:1-4). Those who so obeyed now continued their service, but not to sin. They were now servants of righteousness. Paul again emphasizes two methods of service: to sin and to righteousness. The wages of sin brings death. The word wages indicates that we will receive what we deserve. If we have lived a life of sin, we deserve death. Righteousness, on the other hand, brings eternal life through Christ. If a man was out of work and if he was presented with two jobs, one of which paid very little, and the other which paid a great amount, which job would he choose? All things considered, most people would choose the job of greatest value. That would be the job that paid more. Why is it then, that people when considering heaven or hell, seem to have a great difficulty in choosing which of the two is more beneficial to them? If they readily admit that heaven is the greatest possible goal that they could attain, why then are many more not willing to live the lives necessary to reach that goal?

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. Paul continues to address the relationship between the law and the gospel in this chapter. He places stress on the relationship between law and sin showing that the law in pointing out sin brought death to man. As long as the law was in effect, death was the result. But Christ died to take away the law, thus allowing man to unite with Christ and not with death. The illustration of marriage is used to show the magnitude of the relationships involved. Those under the law were married to death, but those obedient to the Christ are married to the Christ and receive, therefore, subsequent life eternal.
2. This does not mean, however, that the law of sinful or that it was useless. The law pointed out the folly of sin, "for without the law sin was dead". Paul said: "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not know lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." The law, therefore, was perfect in its purpose...to point out and convict men of sin.
3. In the last section of this chapter (vs.13-25), Paul discusses the constant struggle that exists within every man. Every person is placed in the position of making decisions every day concerning sin and righteousness. The attitude that should be taken in making such decisions is presented by Paul in vs. 22: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 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. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." This does not, however, indicate that there exists a distinct and separate mind independent of the body, and a body independent of the mind. It is impossible to serve with the flesh without the consent of the mind. It is also impossible to serve with the mind without the actions of the body. Paul is not sectioning the mind off from the body or vice versa. He is simply discussing the two aspects of man's moral life: 1) following after that which is righteous; here described as the mind, and 2) following after that which is unrighteous; here described as the flesh. He is not advocating the theory that only the flesh sins and it is, therefore, impossible for the mind to sin. This theory is not in harmony with the scriptures (cf. Mt.5:28).

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. In this chapter Paul begins to discuss the life in the Spirit. The first verse, especially the section that says "there is therefore now no condemnation", has often been misapplied. This does not mean that it is impossible to sin once becoming a Christian. I John emphasizes numerous times that we do engage in sin even after we become Christians (I Jn.1:7ff;2:1ff). Note that the people who are in Christ Jesus are qualified by the phrase "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". The act of walking here alluded to does not refer to the motions of placing one foot in front of the other as we walk down the street, but it does refer to walking in a spiritual sense. In I John 1:7ff we are told that those who "walk in the light" are continually cleansed from sin. "Walking in light" refers to obedience to the commands of the Lord.
2. Paul continues by listing many of the results of living after the Spirit and not after the flesh: 1) there is freedom from the law of sin, 2) God, through Christ, condemns sin in the flesh, 3) the righteousness of the law is fulfilled by walking after the Spirit, 4) we are the son of God, 5) the Spirit brings life, 6) we are heirs with Christ, 7) we will be glorified with Christ, 8) the Spirit helps our infirmities, 9) the Spirit maketh intercession for us, et al. In this section (vs.1-27) it is made abundantly clear that there is a very sharp distinction between living a life after the Spirit as opposed to after the flesh. Living a life after the Spirit is tantamount to living a life that is pleasing in the sight of God. It is a life that is made manifest by obedience to the Lord's commands, and that obedience comes from a willingness and desire to serve the Lord.
3. In the last section of the chapter (vs.28-39) Paul considers the possibility of falling from this state of grace. He does not say, however, that this fall is not possible at all, but he emphasizes that it will not occur if a person is properly rooted in the Christ and in the faith. All things work together for those that love God. That does not mean that every single thing will be pleasing to us, but it does mean that the sum of all things works together for good. In considering what might remove a person from faith in Christ, Paul lists tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angles, principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, no any other creature. His conclusion is that none of these things "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." To assume that this passage teaches that it is absolutely impossible for a child of God to fall from grace is to contradict the teaching of the Bible (cf. Heb.6:1ff; 10:24ff). To maintain that God will prevent these people from sinning at all and from falling from grace is to make God a respecter of persons, a position which the Bible also denies (Rom.2:11; Acts 10:34). The position that is advocated by the Bible is that it is possible for a child of God to fall IF that child of God disregards the commands of God and refuses to be obedient to those commands. The Bible also teaches that a child of God will refrain from falling if he maintains obedience (cf. II Pet.1:10). This does not in any way negate the effect of the blood of Christ, for it is through obedience to the commands of God that one initially contacts the blood of Christ, and it is through obedience that one continues to remain in constant contact with the blood of Christ.

CHAPTER NINE

1. In this chapter Paul sets for the relationship that existed between the Jew and the gospel of Christ. He emphasizes his desire that the Jews might be obedient to the Christ which came in fulfillment of the promises to the fathers. He teaches that "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." That may seem to be a contradiction, but his point is well made. He simply points out the fact that physical relationship to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not constitute everything that was necessary to be pleasing in the sight of God. This principle was nothing new. In the Old Testament under the laws of Moses the Jews were required to keep the ordinances of the Lord. When they failed to keep those statutes, they consequently came into the displeasure of the Lord. The situation that existed during the time of Paul was no different; obedience was still required, but now the obedience was not of the law, but of the Christ.
2. Paul continued to point out that God has chosen the means through which obedience is to come just as he chose the ancestors through which Christ was to come. The selection of Jacob over Esau had nothing to do with eternal salvation, but it did deal directly with the lineage through which the Messiah was to be born. That was the extent of the choosing. That event, however, is used to illustrate a choice of yet another kind. God chose that through the Christ salvation would come. He did not choose the law to bring the reward of salvation. The Jews never expressed animosity in the choice of Jacob as the means of Messianic ancestry. Why was it, therefore, that they depicted enmity and hatred now when the Lord chose that Messiah who was promised to bring salvation. Does not God have the power over man as does the potter over the clay?
3. Paul continues to set forth his case by demonstrating that the gospel was for the Gentiles and the Jews. He is careful to point out that this is really nothing new, for Hosea spoke of it hundreds of years prior to Paul's letter to the Romans. The Jews simply did not see the meaning of Hosea's words, which were, of course, the words of the Lord. The Gentiles were therefore able to obtain the same righteousness as were the Jews, that of righteousness by faith. Israel which followed after the law did not attain unto the law of righteousness. Why? Because they were seeking, not after faith, but after the works of the law. In so doing they rejected the foundation of the Christ. Rather than seeing him as the cornerstone upon which the whole of God's plan was built, they view him as a "stumbling stone."

CHAPTER TEN

1. In this chapter Paul continues to make an appeal to those Jews still seeking to maintain their salvation through the works of the law. His emotive appeal is "that they might be saved." Their attempts to obtain salvation were zealous, but it was not according to knowledge. They were ignorant of the righteousness of God and sought to maintain their own righteousness. The lack of knowledge came not from their lack of mental capacity, but rather from their lack of belief in the plan of God which did away with the law of Moses and instituted the law of liberty which was in Christ. Christ was the goal of the law (Gal.3:24ff).
2. The rest of the chapter (vs.6-21) continues to emphasize the oft repeated theme of the book of Romans: the gospel is God's power to save mankind, and that salvation comes through faith in the Christ. The Jews, in order to accept this plan of God, must of necessity confess that Jesus was the Christ. The simple confession did not, however, bring immediate salvation, but it was "unto" (in the direction of) salvation. Faith, like confession, was also "unto" salvation. In this regard there existed no difference between the Jew and Gentile. Both were required to confess the Christ; "for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."
3. Paul points out the necessity of preaching the gospel of Christ by asking these questions: 1) if calling on the name of the Lord is necessary for salvation, how can one call upon him if they have not believed? 2) if believing is necessary, how can they believe unless they heard? 3) if hearing is necessary, how can they hear without a preacher? 4) and if preaching is necessary, how can it take place unless someone is sent to preach? In this manner, Paul accentuates the necessity of preaching and sending preachers to preach. In order for people to "obey the gospel" they must have faith.

That "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The Jews had the opportunity to hear, but when they rejected the Christ and the gospel of Christ, they became angered when that gospel was presented unto the Gentiles of the world. Their anger was, of course, their own fault. They should have been obedient to the gospel of the Christ.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. Concerning the obedience of the Jews, Paul speaks of the "remnant". The term is often used in the Old Testament when referring to those faithful few who were going to return to the land of Judah after the period of captivity. It is always used of the Jews who maintained their faith in God, and in this context the usage is no different. Just as God maintained the faithful few during the times of Elijah, so would he maintain a faithful few of the Jews during the days of Paul. Israel, however, was still seeking righteousness according to the works of the law. In acting in this manner they made the grace of God of none effect. They stumbled at the Christ. They should have built upon him, not reject him.
2. Because the Jews rejected the plan of God, the gospel was delivered to the Gentiles. Such action sparked jealousy in the hearts of the Jews, which in turn should have motivated them to be obedient. Surely if the Lord was going to grant salvation to the Gentiles through the gospel of Christ, he would grant no less than that to the Jews who were his chosen people for hundreds of years. That thought should have caused the Jews to accept the gospel of Christ. It was just as much the plan of God as was the law of Moses.
3. Paul then turns to address the Gentiles. He warns the Gentiles not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. God rejected the Jews, his chosen people, when they rejected the Son of God. They were the original "branches", but the Gentiles were grafted on later. If God would reject those whom he loved for hundreds and hundreds of years due to their rejection, he could certainly reject those who were later "grafted" if they became excessively haughty. Simply because the Jews rejected Christ was no reason for the Gentiles to think that the Jews were "less" than they were.
4. Israel would be restored to the Lord when they returned to the Lord. As Paul previously mentioned, the preaching of the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles served as one way to move them in that direction. "For as ye (i.e. the Gentiles, jla) in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief (Jews): Even so have these (i.e. the Jews, jla) also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy." It is in regard to this plan of God that Paul through the Holy Spirit said: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"
5. Paul concludes by stating that this was God's plan. No one counseled God. He is the source of this plan, and he alone.

CHAPTER TWELVE

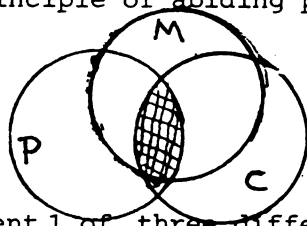
1. Christians were admonished to present their bodies as living sacrifices to the Lord. This was in contrast to the physical sacrifices which were continually offered according to the legislation of the law of Moses. God wanted inward obedience. He did not want his disciples to be conformed to the ways of the world, but rather transformed by the renewing of their mind.
2. Part of that constant spiritual sacrifice involved a service of love to all mankind. It involved a service to other Christians. Paul uses the illustration of the body. Because Christians are members of the same body, one ought not to think more highly of himself than others. They were to be kindly affectioned one to another. They were to rejoice in all things and to be of the same mind one toward another. They were to live peaceably with all men. They were not to surrender to evil, but rather to defeat evil with good.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. In addition to the general admonitions in the previous chapter to respect one another as Christians and to respect all men, Paul encourages Christians to respect authority.

Christians were encourage to obey civil authority because "there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." To go against the civil authority was to go against God. The rulers were not given to deter that which was good, but rather to control the evil. If a person was involved only in good works, he should have no fear of civil authority. If a person was involved in evil works, then he should have fear of civil authority. He again admonished Christians to realize the those in civil authority are "God's ministers". That does not, however, mean that they are righteous in everything that they do, but it does mean that civil laws are to be obeyed. The only exceptions would involve those cases where civil law required one to violate the law of God. Acts 4:19 and 5:29 teach that God is to be obeyed rather than men when a conflict of this nature arises.

- In the closing section of the chapter Paul encourages the Christians in Rome to do everything in love. He lists several of the ten commandments and states that the principles involved in those commands still apply today. Sometimes we have the tendency to think that the ten commandments have no application to us whatever today. This is not correct. We are not under the law of Moses, of which the ten commandments formed the foundation, but we are still obligated to keep the principles which are taught in them. The only exception that is made is the command to observe the sabbath. That command does not specifically apply to worship of the Lord on the Sabbath day, but the principle of reverence and worship still applies to the Lord's day. To illustrate the principle of abiding principles, consider the follow diagram.



Each of the circles represent 1 of three different dispensations which existed since time began. The P represents the age of the patriarchs, the M the age of Moses, and the C the Christian age. In each of these dispensations God dealt with man in different circumstances, but nonetheless, he dealt with them in ways which involved abiding principles. For example, salvation has always involved grace and faith. That principle applied during the time of the patriarchs (Gen.6:8; Heb.11:6), in the time of Moses (Exodus 33:1ff; Heb.11:24ff), and it still applies today (Eph.2:8ff). That principle lies within the overlapping area of these three circles. It still abides today. We follow the commands of the ten commandments only as they are applied to the Christian age. We do not refrain from the sins in those commands because they were part of the law of Moses, but because they are enjoined upon us in this age. We must be careful to make that distinction, subtle though it may be. If we seek to maintain these laws due to our responsibility to the law of Moses, then we make the death of Christ upon the cross of none effect in our teaching. Christ's death took away the law, but it did not take away principles which God ordained to continue. The commands found within the ten commandments (except the one regarding the sabbath) were part of God's plan long before the ten commandments were given as a codified law to the Jews at Mt. Sinai. It was always wrong to kill (Gen.4 & Gen.9). It was always wrong to commit adultery (Gen.34). These sins were always forbidden by God.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

- One of the tendencies that was involved in Judaising Christians involved the compulsion to bind certain observances upon those who became Christians but who were not of Jewish descent. In this chapter Paul deals with this problem and other related to it. There developed a dissension concerning the eating of meats and the keeping of days. Some who were involved in pagan worship prior to becoming Christians were used to associating meats offered to idols with pagan practices. They had difficulties therefore, in partaking of meat that were offered to idols after they became Christians. It was hard for them to disassociate the practice from pagan rituals. Paul taught that meat, in and of itself, was not sinful, but that the use of it to cause another

Christian to stumble (i.e. sin) was wrong. That same principle applied to the keeping of days as well. Days were not in and of themselves sinful, but if the keeping of certain days caused another Christian to sin, then that act was wrong.

2. The principle that is taught within this chapter is often misunderstood. It does not refer solely to matters of taste. If someone does not like the color of clothes that I wear or the way I part my hair and it "offends" them, I am not required by this principle to cease wearing that color of clothes and begin to part my hair in a different fashion. The word "offend" as it is used in this context does not refer to such matters of taste. The word refers to sin. Causing a brother to stumble is causing a brother to be weakened in such a way as to make a way for him to sin. This sort of action is wrong. Concerning this, Paul encouraged those who were stronger in the faith to help along those who were weaker by not engaging in such activities as would cause them to be offended.
3. The principle that is taught in this chapter (cf. I Cor.8 & 10) is one which emphasizes discipline in stronger Christians. Paul said: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Paul often commented about the privileges which were his, but which he never exercised so as not to cause any such problems with his brethren (I Cor.9).

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. Based upon the principle expounded in the previous chapter Paul encourages the brethren of Jewish and Gentile backgrounds to dwell together in unity. They were admonished to please others rather than themselves just as Christ pleased not himself.
2. In the second section of the chapter (vs.7-13) Paul again alludes to prophecies from the Old Testament which were directed to the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. Jews and Gentiles in the church were therefore to receive one another in the faith of Christ.
3. Paul then speaks of his ministry to the Gentiles. He did not preach anything different to the Gentiles than he did to the Jews. He said: "I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." This was accomplished everywhere that he preached.
4. In the closing verses of this chapter Paul speaks of his desire to come to Rome to visit the church there.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1. The greatest part of the last chapter of the epistle to the Romans contains personal greetings sent by Paul to different saints in Rome. He does, however, contend for a very strong point when he admonishes the brethren to "mark them which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." This teaching, remember, did not proceed from the pen of Paul except that it was written through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. The sort of people that Paul was speaking about were those who "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." The strength of withdrawing from such disorderly people lies within the power of proper Christian fellowship. If Christians are not actively involved in the Biblical doctrine of fellowship, then withdrawing from those who are unsound, unruly, etc. has no strength.
2. In his closing remarks Paul once again makes reference to obedience (vs.26). That obedience to the gospel of Christ (the faith) forms the core of the book of Romans.

ROMANS: A REVIEW

The book of Romans constitutes one of three major efforts in the New Testament to deal with the relationship between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. There are several positions which could be considered: 1) the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ are totally distinct and therefore unrelated in any manner; 2) the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ are totally inter-related to the extent that they are mutually inclusive; 3) the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ are related, but not totally so. Of the three possibilities mentioned I know of no one who advocates the second position. Most realize that there exists some element of relationship between the law of Moses and the gospel, the

big question is the extent to which that relationship is involved. The book of Romans set forth the thesis that salvation is obtained through the gospel of Christ to those who believe. Paul teaches that: 1) the Gentiles are lost in sin, 2) the Jews, who claim to teach the truth are oftentimes guilty of the very things that they teach against, 3) all, therefore, are under the condemnation of sin, 4) salvation is of faith, not of works by themselves as the law dictated, but through obedience to faith, 5) Abraham constitutes an example of the means through which faith and grace works, 6) those who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death and rose to walk in newness of life, 7) everybody is serving either sin or righteousness, 8) the law was taken away by the Christ that we might be joined to him, 9) man is always in the position of deciding between the right and the wrong, 10) those in Christ Jesus walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, 11) salvation for the Jews does not come through their heritage, 12) the prophets spoke of the salvation which would be the Gentiles through the gospel, 13) the Jews grew jealous because of the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, 14) the Gentiles could be severed from the tree of righteousness for their unbelief just as were the Jews for theirs, 15) Christian unity entails service to all, 16) Christian responsibility includes obedience to civil law, 17) Christian liberty involves discipline and toleration of that which is not inherently sinful but which may become instrumentally sinful, 18) Christian fellowship does not extend itself to those which cause divisions and offenses in the Lord's church. A much fuller treatment of this book is not possible in the space allowed, but it must be studied in conjunction with the books of Galatians, Hebrews, and James in order to understand the complete relationship between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ.

FIRST CORINTHIANS

Paul started the church in Corinth (Acts 18), so it is no surprise that he wrote to that group of Christians several times. The city of Corinth was well known as a city of wickedness. It was important, therefore, for the Lord's church to be as pure as they could possibly be. The church at Corinth had a few impurities in it that needed some corrections. Paul writes to deal with those specific problems.

CHAPTER ONE

1. We learn from Acts 18 that Paul spent a period of about 18 months in the city of Corinth. It was through his efforts that the church at Corinth began. It was natural for him to be concerned about the status of the Lord's effort in that community. Following the introduction (vs.1-9), Paul immediately begins to deal with the problems in the church. He was informed by them which are of the house of Chloe that there were contentions and divisions in the church at Corinth. He admonished the Christians to be of the same mind, perfectly joined together in their speech and judgment. He could not understand why it was that some claimed to follow Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas.
2. In speaking against such divisions he posed some very strong rhetorical questions: 1) Is Christ divided? 2) Was Paul crucified for you? 3) Were ye baptized in the name of Paul? The answer to each of these questions was of course NO! Why then was it that the church at Corinth was divided over these issues?
3. Paul speaks against these divisions in the remaining part of the chapter. He is thankful that he had not baptized many people. He said: "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Many have quoted this verse in an attempt to relegate the Bible's teaching concerning baptism to some dark and obscure corner of God's plan of salvation. If this is true, then Paul went against the mission of Christ when he admitted to having baptized Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanus. Was Paul wrong in baptizing these people? Did he violate the teaching of Christ in so doing? Of course not! Paul's statement did not mean that baptism was not required of those believers seeking salvation, but it did mean that Paul did not have to be the one who administered the baptism. Christ baptized, not himself, but through the agency of the disciples. His actions did not deliver a mandate against the necessity of baptism, but they much rather provided an endorsement for it. In addition to this, we have only to look at numerous other Bible passages (cf. Mt.28:18ff; Mk.16:15ff; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; I Pet.3:20ff; et al.)