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MESSAGES FROM ROMANS
(Series XVI)

By Quinton J. Everest

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THE GREATEST PRESENT-DAY TASK

"And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another. Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God. That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which pertain to God. For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed. Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yes, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation: But, as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand," Romans 15:14-21.

The greatest task committed to any individual or group is that which Christ committed to the early church and all who would successively accept and serve Him. Paul now coming to the conclusion of this epistle declares that he has been God's worker to carry on God's work. He declares that the results of his ministry have been sufficient to testify that he has been God's man with God's message. There are many worthwhile and important occupations that can be followed in life, but there isn't anything as important and nothing more urgent than that of getting the message of salvation to the men and women, boys and girls of this generation. Paul recognized this as his responsibility in his day, and it is high time that every Christian of this present moment realize that ours is also a tremendous, and I believe unprecedented, responsibility.

THE WORKER

One thing we need to remember and that is that we never can do the work of God unless we are God's workers. In order to be God's workers, we must be born again, filled with His Spirit, and have a desire to do His complete will. We have greatly advanced in the realm of education. This is commendable, but education alone is not going to bring men to Jesus Christ. A man well educated, but not genuinely born again and filled with the Spirit, trying to handle the Word of God and trying to bring humanity to a higher plane of living certainly is a miserable failure. First of all, a merely higher plane of living in the realm of the educational, the social, the financial, or the material is certainly woefully inadequate. What man needs is to be brought into proper relationship to God. This is only possible through the new birth, through the transforming power of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. When this takes place, man can then make some progress in his other relationships.

No one would question but that the Apostle Paul was a man thus regenerated and filled with the Spirit, and certainly the results of his ministry were commendable and are much to desired. Oh, that we could see this today and that it would be recognized and acknowledged that our task is not merely to tell people that they must love each other, observe the Golden Rule and be generally humanitarian in their considerations. Any preacher or any Christian who proposes this without the regenerating, sanctifying, keeping power of God as the foundation is either woefully ignorant or tragically disobeying God's Word. Jonathan Edwards was right when he said, "I make

it my first business to look after the salvation of my own soul." It's the same thing which Paul, John, Luther, Knox, Bunyan, and Wesley had to do before they could help other souls to Christ. We think of the great results that emanated from their lives, but remember, again, my friend, what I am telling you -- they were God's workers, not merely workers. No man can give something to the other fellow which he himself does not possess. You can't tell others of that which you do not know yourself. Once you have come to a personal, saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, your eyes are going to be opened to the fact that other men are lost and going to Hell. One of the tragic lacks among so-called Christians today is that fine, profound, genuine concern for men's spiritual state. Too much allowance is made for sin. Isms, false religions, and modernism have taken the fire out of Hell. The final judgment day of God Almighty has been modified to please the thinking of present-day mollicoddlers, and so we have a lot of preaching that says, "Repent, as it were," and "be converted in a sense," or "you will be lost to some extent," but we need to remember that Jesus said, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke 13.3. Personally, I have no desire to argue about the nature and duration of a lost world. It is enough for me to know that Jesus said, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment."

A certain man in speaking to a congregation was telling how frantically a certain father was working to get his son out of a building that was on fire. He was telling how like a wild-eyed madman this father ran around the house, tore bars off the windows, broke window-panes in order to rescue his son from the very jaws of death. He couldn't understand why his audience wasn't moved and why there was no response. After he got home, he asked his wife to tell him what was the matter. She said, "Why, dear, your illustration was very fine, with one exception -- you forgot to tell the people that the house was on fire." To act like that when there is no fire is the part of a maniac, and I am sure one reason why we aren't seeing more accomplished for God today and more souls won to Jesus Christ is because there are so few people who realize that men without Christ are in unspeakable danger and are going out into eternity where there is unending weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Oh, that our hearts will be stirred, and that each one of you, with myself, as professing Christians will come to the realization that it is a terrible thing to be a visionless, passionless, careless individual with respect to our fellowmen's relationship to God. When Paul said, "I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ," I believe that he meant not a truth was emitted, not a note was left unsounded, not a principle was undeclared. He was under the supervising direction and dynamically powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, and his life and ministry produced results. I am sure it would be a great thing to go as a genuine, true ambassador of some great, worthwhile government to represent its interests and claims to another nation, but you know, friend, even that is petty business compared with going forth each day in your life and as a preacher into the pulpit as the ambassador of the eternal king of the universe, taking with you His authority and power as you represent Him and His claims before the sons and daughters of earth. Commanding an army or sitting on a throne are small affairs when you set them over against the glorious opportunity of living out and preaching forth the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Recently a certain preacher stated that he did not believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God -- he declared that Christ was merely a good man. The individual talking to him then said, "Well, of course, then, He is not your Savior."

"No, He is not my Savior. I am my own savior."

Such a statement is blasphemy and makes the chills go up and down our backs. No man, however good or great, can be the savior of his own soul, much less the soul of any other man. You might as well try to put power in the engine of your automobile by merely changing the color of the paint on the body to a mild color as to save a sinful man by a beautiful example or a rosy sentiment. If you are going to have power in that motor, you must have gas in the tank. Friends, if we are going to be powerful witnesses for Jesus Christ, we must have sin taken out of our hearts and replaced with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is man's only Savior; "there is no other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:12. There has been one, and there never will be any other, revelation from God; no other way of escape from Hell; no other method of entry into Heaven. May God help us to disregard all modernistic, so-called psychological, supposedly-scientific vaporings that would tear the Gospel apart, that would substitute men's reasoning for God's requirements.

"Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission." The blood has been shed -- there is a balm in Gilead, and the Gospel is the same. May the Lord help us to utterly rely on the supernatural resources and power of the Holy Spirit and then trust Him for supernatural results.

THE WORK

If we will do this, thank God, our work will not be in vain. This Christ Whom I have preached to you today was the center, sphere, and circumference of the Apostle Paul's ministry. Therefore, he could say that the offering up of the Gentiles was acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. The lives of both Jews and Gentiles were being changed; they were taken out of the gutter of sin and placed on the solid foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul declares that his ministry was accredited by signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit of God. How it rejoices my heart that the Spirit of God is still at work and sets His seal on the ministry of His people by working miracles of grace. Many times have we witnessed the healing power of God in the bodies of His children. Here at the Gospel Center Church and in connection with this Worship Hour ministry, we have on repeated occasions rejoiced because of God's mighty working in multiplied ways in answering prayer, in bringing things to pass which were entirely beyond that which we had even asked or thought.

How I praise God today for such a mighty miracle-working Savior, but the most outstanding thing in the realm of miracles and the mighty working of God is when an individual, bound by satan, living in the depths of sin and unable to liberate himself, is in a moment, by the power of God, changed, transformed, and made a new creature in Christ. If preachers and people today would cease going to the doors of certain professors to find out what is most up-to-date, what should be preached, and how we should live; if they would come to the recognition that the same terrible things that used to destroy the soul have not changed, and that no new sin has been discovered, and alas, no old ones have gone out of fashion; that death is the same now as when Cain looked into the face of his murdered brother; that sin is the same awful thing that made Samson blind, put him in prison, and made him grind for the Philistines; and if we could realize that the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is not after all a matter of style and that the robe of true righteousness never goes out of fashion -- I say, if these things could really become a conviction in both the pulpit and the pew, we would see an increasing number of signs and wonders wrought by the power of the Spirit of God. I say again, we are just too easy on sin. It needs to be made clear,

simple, and forceful that sin is damnable; it may be cultured sin or polished sin; we may think it has blue blood in its veins; it may carry a title; it may be aristocratic, or it may be in the slums, but anywhere and everywhere you find it, sin is sin. Friends, it was sin -- yours and mine -- that drove those nails through the hands and feet of Jesus and thrust that spear and wove that thorn-crown. Sin is the most damnable, detestable, hateful thing in all the world. Your work and mine as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ is to live righteous and holy lives, to set a standard by our living, our testifying, and so on that there is power in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus to deliver men from this awful, soul-damning thing. If lives are to be changed and if our nation is to be improved, sin must be washed out. We must cut clear of it; hearts must be cleansed, and this isn't going to be done by mere legislation and social improvement in local communities. It can be done only by the application of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to the hearts and lives of men and women. How thankful we ought to be that Jesus Christ came and died on the cross of Calvary to set us free from the damnableness of sin. You who are supposed to be preaching, and you who are supposed to be Christians and living this life but are not really doing the job, if you have any uncertain note here, you better quit your work and go and do something else that you know more about, like shoveling dirt or coal, or else get right with God, have your heart changed, be conscious of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, and be able to live out and preach forth a message that is positive and genuine and that will do something for humanity.

Finally, Paul declares that the job is so big that he doesn't have to build on another man's foundation. He didn't believe that it was necessary to proselyte. If the other fellow was preaching the Gospel straight and getting men to Jesus Christ, he evidently had no desire to tear down that man's work in order that he might build up his own. Paul had a passion for the lost. He had a vision for men that were perishing. He wasn't trying merely to build up church statistics and steal the other pastor's sheep, so he could go to conference and have a big report, declaring that he had taken in so many members, only to have other folks discover that most of them were stolen sheep. While Paul was working in one community, it seemed that he was thinking about the next one out yonder where they hadn't heard the Gospel and so thus he goes on. He constantly had that other-creature vision, desiring to win men to Jesus Christ. That is the very thing we are trying to do on this Worship Hour broadcast. These broadcasts reach nearly across the nation and a great portion of Canada. How happy we are for letters that come, telling of people who are finding Christ, lives that are being changed and transformed, and family altars that are being set up. People have, after accepting Christ, united with churches, and here and there, throughout the land are making a worthwhile contribution to the cause of Christ. It is our desire that you who are listening to this broadcast just now and have a spiritual need in your heart will acknowledge the same to the Lord Jesus, confess your sins to Him, and let Him come into your heart. My friend, He will save your soul; He will give you peace; He will give you hope for the future, and you can say with the Apostle, "I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that 'which I have committed unto Him against that day,' II Timothy 1:12. May God richly bless and help you to trust Him for the forgiveness of your sins and for every need of your heart and soul.

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"For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you; Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them, verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. When, therefore, I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain. And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen," Romans 15:22-33.

Every normal person desires fellowship -- good or bad, rich or poor, learned or unlearned -- all crave it. Ask the man why he goes to the gambling joint, the beer parlor, or some such place, you will discover that it is not simply because he has the desire to practice wickedness, but because he seeks association with friends. Love seeks the company of that which it loves, and that is the reason a Christian enjoys fellowship with a Christian. They have both been changed by the transforming power of Christ. He has delivered them from the power and dominion of Satan. Because of this, and the sacrifice that made it possible, they have an irresistible desire to live in His presence and to fellowship with those who have experienced a like deliverance. This is the very thing Paul was experiencing. He had received wonderful reports of these Christians at Rome, and his heart was desiring to be with them and enjoy their fellowship. Certainly when they received this epistle, their hearts must have been warmed and encouraged with his wonderful message. I don't think the Apostle Paul arrived in Rome just the way he had anticipated; nevertheless, I am sure that he rejoiced at the opportunity of finally meeting these Christians and having fellowship with them in Christ.

DESIRABLE

It is wonderful how God can take a man whose desires are perverted and sinful and bring about a complete transformation so that he now loves the things he once hated and hates the things he once loved. Whereas, at one time he had no desire for the Word of the Lord, he despised Christians, he would have nothing to do with the true church of Christ, he thought the Christian life dry, undesirable, uninteresting, but now it is exactly the opposite. I have seen this take place in a great number of people in my years of ministry. I am acquainted with scores of them who absolutely refused to be in the house of the Lord on the Sabbath day, much less to be found in a prayer service on Wednesday evening. A fraternal organization, a social gathering of a questionable nature, a dance, the movie-house and numberless other things were the only interests of their lives so far as association and fellowship were concerned, but like the Apostle Paul, they were arrested by the Holy Spirit, convicted, converted, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Now their desires and appetites are for those things which pertain to God, His Holy Word, His house, and His people. The great marvel to them now is that they were ever satisfied with anything less. They

can't possibly understand how they used to revel in that life which was dictated and directed by the devil. If your desires are still for those vile, foul, questionable, sinful things of the world and still you profess to be a Christian, my friend, your profession is vain. A man who really knows Christ as his Savior has no love for the things of this world. John plainly declares, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." One reason why some people are not getting along with each other in some of our churches is because they don't have their desires really changed. If they were, they have certainly lost what they once possessed. When one really loves God, His house, and His Word, he is also going to love God's people. He is not always going to be picking and fussing at them and having trouble. It isn't going to be irksome or a cross for you to go to church. With the Psalmist, you will say, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord."

A certain man was asked whether he was enjoying his Christian life. He said, "Really, I am sorry that you have asked me the question in that way. If you had asked me whether I was praying, I would have said, 'Yes.' If you had asked me whether I was trying to walk uprightly and honestly before my fellowmen, I would have said, 'Yes.' If you would have asked me whether I was observing the ordinances and the directions of my church, I would have said, 'Yes?' but to really say that I am enjoying my religion is a statement that I cannot honestly and sincerely make." There are a lot of people in this very condition, and I am sure, some of you listening to me, if you were honest, would no doubt testify to this. Too many of you have merely joined the church, gone through the forms and routines prescribed by the religious organization of which you are a member, but have never really had a change of heart. You have never experienced the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit. He is not your constant Companion, Guide, and Comforter; therefore, you sort of feel that you are in a straight-jacket. You feel you have to live so-and-so and do so-and-so. For you to come to a real knowledge of Christ would change your whole outlook; it would bring you to the highest plane on which it is possible for man to live in this world; it would give you the heart satisfaction for which you have been longing. Nothing is more desirable than fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, Who was one with the Father in the creation of the world -- He Who is King of kings and Lord of lords. In turn, nothing is more wonderful and desirable so far as human fellowship is concerned than that which we enjoy with those who enjoy His presence, who love the things He loves and desire to do as He directs. This fellowship is high, holy, free from regret, remorse, and bitterness.

BENEFICIAL

Then it is not only desirable, but it is also beneficial -- it strengthens us in the faith. In Acts the second chapter, it tells us of those who had gladly received the word of the Lord and were baptized, continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread and prayers. The Hebrew writer also says, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another and so much the more as ye see the day approaching," Hebrews 10:25. Some people say they can live just as good a Christian life, be just as strong in the faith, and accomplish just as much for God if they don't go to church as if they do. But either they are wrong, or God's Word is wrong. If you are physically able to be at the house of the Lord, and if you have the advantages of a Christian company of people where the Word of God is being preached in its purity and power, there is no such thing as your being just as good a Christian without the church as with it. Furthermore just as in the early chapters of Acts and also in Rome, so

today the unity of real, genuine Christian fellowship makes its impact upon the community and the nation. Greater things can be accomplished and the devil be defeated. I have read that when the natives of India want to capture a large snake, they will start a fire in a jungle which will drive the snakes by the hundreds toward a widespread netting. After they have them enclosed, they pick out the one they desire to capture. It is lassoed with a wire loop at the end of a heavy stick and then dragged out and seized by a large number of natives. They take a large bamboo and many smaller splints and bind the snake securely at every inch of his entire length. The operation is finally finished by forcing the upper jaw upon the lower, tying the two together to the bamboo in such a way that the snake can't even hiss. Certainly if the church is possessed with real unity of Christian fellowship the devil can never hold out against a unitedness and aggressiveness that is centered in Christ. Christian fellowship was not only something that strengthened Paul, but he was encouraged; he was assured that these Christians were striving together with him in prayer that God would give him deliverance from wicked men and that he could minister the Word of the Lord effectively. What a privilege is ours to pray one for another in these days of unusual stress and strain. How often have we rejoiced that not only did our listeners send their requests, but after a time a letter would come, telling of wonderful answers to prayer. How wonderful that you and I, even though hundreds or thousands of miles apart, can unite our prayers and God's cause can be advanced, sinners saved, believers sanctified, and the church strengthened in the faith. There have been times when the work was strenuous, the battle seemed rather fierce, and we wondered if we could continue on in this ministry, but I am sure the pull of God which we felt at various times was because of your faithful prayers and intercession that God would provide and make it possible for His Word to go forth and make further advances into the ranks of the enemy, thus rescuing a few more sin-blighted, devil-bound souls.

CONDITIONAL

As I have already suggested, this wonderful fellowship that we enjoy with Christ and with each other as Christians is conditional. Individuals and groups are brought together by social, financial, industrial, and professional reasons. Mechanics, physicians, bankers, and so on have their associations for the consideration of plans and themes of mutual interest. We also find that men are bound together by ties of race, language, family, or class, but it is vividly portrayed today that none of these bonds are comprehensive or universal there is no common rallying ground there is no center that is strong enough or broad enough to include all races, classes, and conditions. When men come together simply because of self-interests, and then when the reason that created that union is terminated, that fellowship or whatever it might be called, ceases to exist. There can be no permanent fellowship, unity, or real understanding among men until there is something strong enough to overcome the sinful selfishness of man's heart. In many places, we see men trying to bring about a fellowship one with the other by mere organization, but this has never been successful, even though it is religious in character. Some of the greatest strife, separation, and even some of the greatest wars of history have been over matters of religion. Loyalty to an organization or denomination is certainly insufficient; it must go deeper than that. Education is mighty fine if it is properly controlled and directed. It brings to the mind of man the best that has been said or written, but when it comes to the problems of transforming human lives and bringing to man the fellowship that he desires, education stands absolutely helpless. How well we also know today that legislation cannot produce this. If it could, we certainly would go to work on Congress or the United Nations, but no system of compulsion can create love, sympathy, service, sacrifice, and that

which is necessary for real fellowship. Again, we are thrown back to the one and only source, and that is the regenerating, sanctifying presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the heart and life of man. As Jesus said, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." We hear orators talking glibly about the brotherhood of man -- there is only one basis for this, and that is Christ and His shed blood. Outside of Him, there is no such thing as brotherhood or real, genuine fellowship. People are always trying to cut corners and find some easy, carnal way to create what their hearts desire. Oh, that we would quit trying to invent and create something by ourselves, and get back to the remedy of Jesus. By His personal touch and by the impartation of His Holy Spirit, He transforms natures and welds them into a true, Christian fellowship. This gives us something that far transcends nature, grace, kinship, or even a visible church.

Certainly we are living in a day of a rapidly approaching crisis. The powers of satan and the Savior are in great conflict. You who are listening to me this very moment have made a choice which places you on one side or the other. Many of you are on satan's side, which is the wrong side. Oh, that in this very moment you would give your heart and life to Jesus Christ and come into fellowship and sonship with Him and enjoy fellowship with God's children. For you to thus acknowledge and accept Him will mean blessing now, but the day is not far distant when you will be one with Him in glory, and He will acknowledge you as His own before the entire universe. Certainly if He is not ashamed to call us His own we should not mind the misunderstandings that we experience here in this world.

It is said that an English officer was once being treated with neglect and scorn by his fellow-officers on account of his promotion from an obscure position to higher rank. They were not willing to forget his humble birth, and passed him by with neglect and coldness. His commanding officer heard of it and so one day he went into the barracks and going up to him in his tent, he sat down and talked to him for some time. Then the commanding officer took his arm and walked arm in arm with him for half an hour in front of the officers' tents, while they saluted their commanding officer, with profound respect, in which his companion shared. He then left the ground, while they looked after him in amazement and humiliation. After that day, there was no lack of respect for the new officer. His commander was not ashamed to own him.

Thus our blessed Brother and Savior claims kinship with us before earth and Heaven; thus He presents our prayers before the throne and is not ashamed of us before His Father's face. He honors us in the highest court of His universe.

My friend, won't you confess your sins to Him, forsake them, and take Him as your Savior? Your peace, joy, and fellowship will be such as you have never previously known and will extend to all eternity.

* * * * *

3

GOOD EXAMPLES

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever

business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my well-beloved Epaenetus, who is the first fruits of Achaia unto Christ. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Salute Andronicus and Junia, 'my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles; who also were in Christ before me. Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ; and Stachys my beloved. Salute Appelles, approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. Salute Rufus, chosen in the Lord; and his mother and mine. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you," Romans 16:1-16.

In the beginning of this Epistle to the Romans, we saw the Apostle marshaling all of his powers of language in order to describe the wretched sinfulness of men who were without God. In this concluding chapter the only way that the Apostle Paul is able to describe the glorious working of the Gospel in the hearts of men is to bring to our attention those who are in Christ, whose desires have been changed, whose lives have been transformed and who are of the nobility of Heaven. There is no mystery about it -- it is just the result of a divine re-creation, wherein lives that were wretchedly sinful and degraded, controlled by the devil and headed for Hell are changed by the processes of divine regeneration, sanctification, and preservation. Glorious usefulness is evident; there is now the fruitfulness of holiness, honesty, and uprightness. Destiny has been completely altered it really should put a shout in our soul to know that God through Christ has today counted us worthy to link arms with such nobles of faith and life as these who walked out of the pages of this Epistle to the Romans.

When we look at our newspapers today and see men in both high and low places selling us down the river, ruining our nation, gambling their own souls and countless others to Hell, having no regard for principle, honesty, or spirituality -- no regard whatever for man, but just following their own carnal, devilish, and wickedly perverted desires, thus making this world more and more a tragic and unsafe place to live, we certainly recognize that we want some kind of refuge other than that which this world is able to afford. Therefore, we have before us in this chapter a hope-invigorating, heart-inspiring, life-transforming message which should cause us to be satisfied with nothing less than that which was provided on the cross of Calvary. Here are people who had lived in the shameful practices and orgies of evil. Some were slaves, others were businessmen and women, and still others were educators. We have reason to believe there were politicians among them. There were husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. They were all of this, but at the same time, were of the devil. They were a part of a mighty empire that was steeped in the most vicious cruelty. It is impossible to describe the drunkenness, immorality, dishonesty, and the wretched cruelty of the nation and these people of whom they were a part, but now their practices are changed. They perform their work with a new fidelity; they live their lives with a new purpose -- pagan philosophies are gone; wretched practices have vanished. They are the products of God's transforming grace, which makes them gentle, pure, and righteous right in the midst of a vast and corrupting society of evil. I declare unto you that the Gospel of Jesus Christ will do no less today

when given a chance. It could defeat sin and wickedness, clean up crooked politics, root out gambling, annihilate the godless liquor traffic, stop our adulterous divorce mills, bring about chastity and respect in homes and in every other sphere of life; in fact, there is no limit to what could be accomplished by a mighty, Biblical revival and a general turning to Jesus Christ.

QUALITY

The people of whom we read in this chapter and to whom Paul was sending greetings were certainly of a desirable quality. My heart shudders and my soul sinks within me when I realize the quality of hearts that we have in so many places of responsibility in this nation. This is not true in one sphere only, but the whole fiber of our nation -- educationally, politically, socially, commercially, and even religiously -- has corrupted to such a state that we wonder how long the fumes and the odor from this decaying, rotten, diseased mess can go up into the nostrils of God without His judgments and wrath descending upon us in unprecedented fury.

There were women at Rome wearing in a single necklace of pearls a fortune of \$500,000.00, and at the same time they were as vile and wretched as the devil could make them. Their very names have perished with their follies and vices, but the very first verse of this chapter gives us the name of Phebe, whose name has been ever glorious and will continue so in the Gospel. If Alexander the Great, Napoleon, Mussolini, Hitler, and some of the political leaders of the present hour, as well as religious and other leaders, could see what they are going to face at the judgment bar of God and for all eternity, certainly they would gladly exchange their fame for such an enrollment on the divine books of Heaven as we have here in the letter of this great missionary of the cross. Paul reveals that they were more than fair-weather Christians; they laid down their own necks in order to be his faithful helpers in Christ Jesus. Like Paul, some of them had been cast into prison, but because of their faith in Christ, they flinched not in the presence of trial, but were willing to undergo shame and loss for Jesus Christ. They were stouthearted and were ready to face ridicule, poverty, and persecution rather than sacrifice principle. To them the applause of this world was but an empty breath. They realized the praise of the newspaper would soon die away and that military glory is merely a bubble reputation. In the presence of God's Holy Word, they were persuaded that the most important thing was to see that they were approved before Him, Who searches the hearts and tries the reins, Whose eyes are as a flame of fire. They realized and acknowledged that they were serving One Who knew them altogether. Voltaire lamented on his deathbed, "I have swallowed nothing but smoke. I have intoxicated myself with the incense that turned 'my head.'" Here were people who were common, quite unknown, and in many respects despised, yet they had more than smoke -- they had experienced the fire of God in purifying their souls. They refused to be whipped about by the incense of public opinion, but were supremely desirous of the approval of God.

As one goes over this list of names and considers the characteristics of these Christians at Rome, it gives him a new vision and a real appreciation of what the Gospel can accomplish in the lives of men and women. Here in the seat of the mightiest empire on earth with its power steeped in the most vicious cruelty and wickedness, we find this company of Christ-loving men and women. Their former spirit of pagan philosophy is gone; the wretchedness of their former practices has vanished; they are a gentle, pure, and righteous demonstration of what the grace of God can do right in the midst of a vast and corrupting society of evil. These Christians were not

lacking in spiritual vitamins and remaining just pitiful skeletons -- they were filled with and exemplifying the power of the Holy Spirit and were ever-increasing giants in the Lord Jesus Christ. Their lives were directed into channels of productive service instead of giving way to inactivity and laziness. They were not like a lot of people I've met who are always talking about their goodness, but seem to be good for nothing. Those who were in business were carrying it on in a manner which was acceptable to God. Their marriages were performed in the fear of God with the desire that His blessing would be experienced. Paul never speaks about Priscilla and Aquila, except together. This speaks of the nearness of their lives; they worked together, worshipped together, had social activities together, traveled together, suffered adversity together, and planned together. Surely no husband or wife could desire anything higher or nobler than this kind of Christian relationship in the family. Such a condition and characteristic are the only things that are going to change situations for many of you listening to me. You know very well that unless you come to Christ and accept Him very soon, some of your homes are going to be completely on the rocks. Oh, how different it is when we turn our hearts and homes over to Christ. Thus, I could go on speaking for some time about the fine quality of heart and character of these converts in the church at Rome.

I am sure that one of the greatest needs of the present hour is for a better quality of church members. In too many places, church membership has been cheapened until it means practically nothing. All some preachers and church boards are interested in is piling up numbers so they can make a bigger report to their conferences. I find that a great many ministers and people who are members of churches try to impress others by telling them how many members they have. I usually start in by asking them how many they have in the mid-week prayer meeting and how many attend the Sunday night service. Those two things give a pretty good indication of the spirituality of the church and whether it is accomplishing anything in the community. When Jesus started out in His earthly ministry, He didn't take a bunch of sinners into His group. When it was time for the early church to form an organization, they looked for men who were full of faith, the Holy Ghost, and wisdom. A church that takes people in as members when they do not know that they are born again and have not separated themselves from sin and the things which are of the world is doing more harm than good. It is a tragic detriment to the community and to the world. We have become greatly exercised over the things that are going on in our nation, both in high and low places, but the cause for these things and the major portion of the responsibility goes right back to the church, where standards have been lowered, doctrines polluted, and membership requirements are as far from the Bible as the sun is from the moon. Paul uses such phrases as these: "my helpers in Christ Jesus." "those who are in the Lord," "those who labored much in the Lord," and so on. The phrase "in the Lord" is repeated and emphasized, and certainly this is what is needed today rather than just "in the church," or "in an organization." The first question for you to ask yourself and concerning those in the church is not, "Who am I," or "What are they doing?" but really, "What am I? Am I really a Christian?" There won't be any real immortality about your work -- that is merely earthly. Our churches will crumble; our sermons and works will pass into oblivion, our organizations will be scrapped unless we are really performing our work for Christ. It will be only the true, born-again, Spirit-filled Christian whose work will stand the test of the judgment day and will extend throughout the eternal ages to come.

UNITY

We also note that there was not only a good quality about the people in this church, but there was also a fine spirit of unity. By that I don't mean "uniformity." God never intended that there should be uniformity in the church. We don't all look alike, and I don't think He expected us to act alike. We have different set-ups in our organizations; our churches are designed differently; forms, ceremonies, and the order in which our services are conducted may be entirely different, but if we have been truly born again, old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new. When Christ thus lives within and our hearts have been cleansed and filled with the Holy Spirit, certainly we have one common interest, and that interest is Christ and His cause; because of that, there is a fine spirit of Christian unity. The early church leaders didn't always see alike in everything, but there was one thing in which they were a unit, and that was that they preached Christ and Him crucified and that outside of Christ, there was absolutely no salvation. This is one point on which we cannot differ if we expect to survive and have God's blessing upon us.

Paul's writings inform us that even amidst the social conditions of that day, where there existed masters and slaves, there was true brotherhood existing in Christ. When this glorious Gospel is given free course, it deals with the rich and the poor, the religious and the irreligious, the educated and the uneducated and unites them all in one common fellowship in Christ Jesus. We hear much about unity and consideration one for the other in the church, the community, and the nation, but it is only the Gospel of Christ that will properly unite men and classes. The fact that there was a great variety -- men, women, young people, individuals in business, mothers -- in fact, a varied group with varied occupations, yet all of this made unity all the more wonderful and gloriously attractive. Up until this time, woman had no place in the church or in public life, and now we see her elevated by Christianity and serving the Christ effectively in bringing others to know Him. The only place in the world where you find womankind elevated as she ought to be is where Christ rules and reigns. Certainly the women of America ought to consider this very seriously. In the majority of cases, spirituality and morality among the girls and women are on the skids, and mark what I tell you, it is going to be anything but desirable so far as womankind is concerned if there isn't a great change and a coming back to the standards of purity, morality, and righteousness. Oh, how we need to pray for a mighty, sin-killing, devil-defeating, holiness-producing, righteousness-propagating revival.

HUMILITY

Finally, there is another thing that I note about the converts of this church, and that is that each individual was willing to take the place God indicated for him. It didn't make any difference how humble the place. Not very many of them seemed to be unusually magnificent or outstanding as men would consider it, but they were performing a simple, quiet, but important service for Christ. Some people are too retiring, and others are too forward, but it is a wonderful thing to find God's place and then fill it with a God-honoring service to the best of our ability. God not only needs captains, but He also needs privates. He needs not only big rivers that run into the sea, but a lot of little rivers that run into the big ones. We can't all be notable pioneers, but as Paul states here, we can all be helpers and perform God's bidding.

My dear friend, can it be said of you that you are a good example of the Gospel of Christ? Are you really living for God as you ought? Remember, there is only one way that this is possible,

and that is to be united to Him. Ten times in sixteen verses Paul uses the little word "in" which expresses the source and the secret of all that he has described. It is union with Christ Who died and rose again and Who is now alive forevermore. That alone can produce holiness of heart and consistency and earnestness of life. Don't ever forget -- not for even one single moment -- that your salvation, your holiness, your courage, endurance, and service are possible only as you are in the Lord, born again and filled with His Spirit. May God bless you and help you to see this, and may you look to Him and trust Him for your need just now.

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COMPLETE VICTORY

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf; but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. Timotheus my work fellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith; To God only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen," Romans 16:17-27.

In the early days of our country, a soldier was positioned in a forest as a sentry to watch for the approach of Indians. It was a position of peculiar danger; savages were lurking in the woods, around the fort, watching for an opportunity to attack and kill the sentinels. Three different men had been surprised and killed without having had time to fire a shot. This happened for three successive days. This fourth soldier was now left with strict orders for the utmost vigilance. As he was left alone, he was thinking very seriously about his situation and determined that he would allow no living thing to approach him under any circumstances without having a satisfactory explanation of what it was.

In a short time, over in the distance, he heard a rustling; he watched with intensity, with his gun ready, until finally he saw that it was just a wild hog common to the country and would soon disappear. After a while, another one came into view. It wasn't too long until off in another direction, the leaves were rustling again, and a third wild hog appeared. He seemed to be getting rather used to this, but watched carefully every movement of these animals. He noticed that there seemed to be a slight awkwardness in the movements of this third animal. The more he watched it, the more he felt that it was an Indian covered with the skin of an animal, thus approaching him. If it was an Indian, the safest thing for him to do was to shoot. If it was simply a wild hog and he

should shoot him, then his comrades would ridicule him. He wisely resolved that he wouldn't take any risks, and as the object continued its approach, he raised his rifle, took aim, and fired. With a bound and a yell, an Indian leaped to his feet and fell back dead. By his careful watchfulness, he saved his life where others had lost theirs by their carelessness.

Paul has in this epistle revealed how tragically sin has defeated and enslaved man. As he proceeds, he tells us of the redemption that God has provided through Jesus Christ in order that man might be delivered from sin and the power of the devil. Surely it is a glorious salvation, something that not only saves, but also fully satisfies and fits us for the skies. But now Paul declares there is still a battle to be fought and won. Wicked and sinful men -- some of them religious at that -- and the devil are doing all they can to defeat the cause of God by attacking and overcoming those whom God has redeemed. By vigilance, diligence, and trustfulness in the grace and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul declares that we can have complete victory.

TROUBLEMAKERS

Out of the fullness of his heart, Paul, in his earnest, loving way warns these people of the lurking dangers which continually confront and surround them. He declares that there are those who will cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which they have learned. These people are to be marked and avoided. This tribe of troublemakers and offence-producers certainly haven't lessened since Paul's day. They are abounding in an increasing and appalling manner. Multitudes of people are being confused and frustrated. I heard a preacher say the other day that a certain minister had for his main subject, "Hot Biscuits, Pork, and Coffee." He stated that all another group could see in the Bible was hog tracks from Genesis to Revelation, and so they were preaching on that. Some folks have spent decades trying to determine which day they should observe as the one for rest and worship. Such nonsensical, unreasonable, confused thinking only adds confusion to confusion. I could spend this whole broadcast and a dozen more talking about religious hobbies, but with the Apostle Paul, I would like to say, mark these people, for their hobby-riding causes division, and they produce scandals which are stumblingblocks. Anything which tends to divide, segregate, and disintegrate the true body of Christ and everything that offers a substitute for God's holy truth are scandals to Christianity. I have found that these division-makers and scandal-mongers desire to argue -- they revel in carnal debates. The best thing to do is just like Paul said, "avoid them." I have discovered that if a man cheats you, you better quit dealing with him. If he slanders you, just take care to live a conscientious and holy life so that nobody will believe him. No matter who he is nor how he misuses you, the best and the wisest way is just to let him alone. I have never found anything better than this cool, calm, quiet, holy, Christ-like way of dealing with the wrongs of persons and organizations. To be sure, we are to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints; we are not to give in to molly-coddlers, modernists, and Bible-destroyers, but the thing Paul is saying is that a speculative theory is not sufficient reason for throwing a fire-brand amongst the articles of faith. Such actions are radically different from the religious reformation of Luther and others, for these were returns to Gospel simplicity and fundamentals. Paul isn't talking about the man who is a genuine seeker after truth, but the fellow who delights in making breaches in the Christian fortress. These people, says he, are to be avoided. Be sure that you are born again, filled with the Spirit, walking in accordance with the directions of God's Holy Word and let these dissenters chew their own rags.

Paul goes on to say why they are dissenters; they are not primarily interested in serving the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies. To be sure, they say some good things; their speeches are fair and smooth, but Paul says they deceive the hearts of those that are sincere. We are living in a day of abounding apostasy. Many people were once well saved and sanctified, but they have drifted from their original moorings, and now in order to cover up their backsliding, their sins of transgression, and the rottenness of their lives, they have to hatch up a new doctrine that will salve their consciences. So they get out on a stump and holler a little louder than someone else, or if they are a little more suave than the other fellow, they speak smoothly and seem to be able to find a lot of dupes that are willing to follow them, no matter how wild and extreme they may be. Remember, however, that Paul says these individuals are just trying to build up for themselves a following in order that they might enrich themselves materially and financially. May God grant that we shall grow up in our faith as well as in our minds, grow up in our minds as well as our bodies and really think as we read and pray as we think and read.

It is a terrible thing to even say, but many people today have taken advantage of religion in order to make something out of it for themselves. At the very foundation of their lives, there are false doctrine and also false living, but, my friend, don't be surprised at the existence of these religious fifth columnists. A traitor is always the proof that there are the genuine. Apostates prove the reality of apostles. Hypocrites tell us that Christians live. Error proves truth. God's Word is full of warnings and gives us ample tests that we may put to religions and their leaders as to whether or not they are genuine and really endeavoring to further the cause of Christ and bring men to a saving knowledge of the Great Savior, thus making it possible for them to inherit Heaven.

SATAN

From the visible enemy of false teachers propagating and injecting their erroneous doctrines in order that they might fatten their own purses, Paul turns to the invisible foe that inspires these deceptive propagandists. He declares that back of these evil connivers is the devil himself and then assures these Christians and Christians of all time that as we put our faith in Christ we are given an unconditional guarantee of victory. His declaration is, "the God of peace shall bruise satan under your feet shortly." The word "shortly" doesn't necessarily mean soon, but swiftly. He meant that when God once began His work to defeat the devil that His conquest of satan would be short and sharp. Notice who is going to do the job of defeating the devil! It is the God of peace. He has secured peace for us in our hearts and lives, and the time is not far distant when He is going to take the devil in hand, bind him, and cast him into the lake of fire. Then will appear the new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, and we as God's redeemed children will rule and reign eternally with Him. Thank the Lord, we are not depending on the smallness and the limitations of our own resources. We have a faithful, powerful friend on whom we are relying and whose help we may constantly and successfully invoke. Realizing that God is our Captain, we can well rise superior to difficulty, remembering that through Him, ultimate victory is certain. The devil destroyed the world's moral peace when he entered the garden of peace, and ever since he has been working in the same direction: he has destroyed the peace of hearts, of individuals, of churches, and of nations, but the time isn't far distant when the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, our Great Savior is going to completely and finally incarcerate in the lake of fire this destroyer of peace.

A fine, Christian Negro slave was in his secret place of prayer. His master overheard his groaning, weeping, and praying to God for deliverance from the devil, and his master said, "Pompey, you seem to have a good deal of trouble with the devil; and he does not trouble me a bit. Yet you are a good, praying man, and I am not a Christian at all. How does that come about, Pompey?"

The slave replied, "Ah, Massa, I will soon explain that. When you are out shooting ducks, which do you send the dog after first, Massa, the ones that fall dead, or the ones that are wounded a little, and are trying to get away?"

"Why, Pompey, the wounded ones, of course. The dead ones we are sure of, and can take our time to pick them up."

"Just so, Massa. And so it is with satan. He has got all of those that are not born again, fast and sure. But those that know the Lord, and that are getting away, he sets all his dogs after; while he picks up the others by and by." That was not only an impressive answer for Pompey's master, but for us. If the devil is after us, he doesn't have us.

There have been people tempted to wonder whether or not God has been so taken up with the consideration and management of other and higher worlds and allowed the devil to get the upper hand until God has forgotten us here on this planet; forgotten that we are well nigh overwhelmed by the triumphant progress of sin, misery, and satan; forgotten that the lovers of truth are comparatively few and their efforts seemingly uninfluential; forgotten that many anxious souls are waiting for the fulfillment of the promise that shortly God will bruise satan under their feet. But like Pompey and like the Psalmist, when we begin to breathe the enlarging atmosphere of God's broad realm of infinite thoughts and truth, we discover that the church will not long be fettered; the feet of God's saints will not always be fastened in the stocks; the day of iron oppression will soon be past, and with a firm, joyous tread, we shall march victoriously on the streets of glory with our blessed and loving Savior. With the Apostle, I say, thank God, the devil is a defeated foe.

"Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world," I John 4:4, and because Christ has overcome and conquered the devil, we, too, through Him, are more than conquerors.

VICTORY THROUGH CHRIST

Paul, now in his doxology, expresses the desire that these Roman Christians will be firmly established in Christ. He recognizes that as weak, vacillating, professing Christians, they would be of little benefit to the world. He couldn't see any worthwhileness or any contribution that could be made by compromisers who would nullify their profession by wrong conduct. He challenges them to be true in spite of Rome's power and sinful way of living. He knew it wouldn't be the easiest thing in the world to be true to God while all about them were dishonesty, impurity, and political corruption, but he knew that with Christ in their hearts, with the eternal truths of God as their foundation and with the everlasting arms of the Almighty about them, they need not fail.

Many things of change and progress have come into our material world; things are certainly vastly different from what they were in Paul's day, but time, change, and material progress have not

abrogated nor nullified the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Morally and spiritually man's need has not changed; the laws of truth, honesty, morality, and prayer are the same. Man possesses the same spiritually needy heart as in Adam's day and Paul's day. Thank God, the redemption which is provided is just as adequate. It operates on the same principles and still proclaims the message of salvation through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Friend, it can change, transform, regenerate, purify, and mightily empower you. It is my prayer that in the closing moment of this broadcast you will confess your sins to Him, invite Him to come into your heart, and then glorify Him by your daily living. May God bless and help you to do so, just now, is my prayer.

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THE END