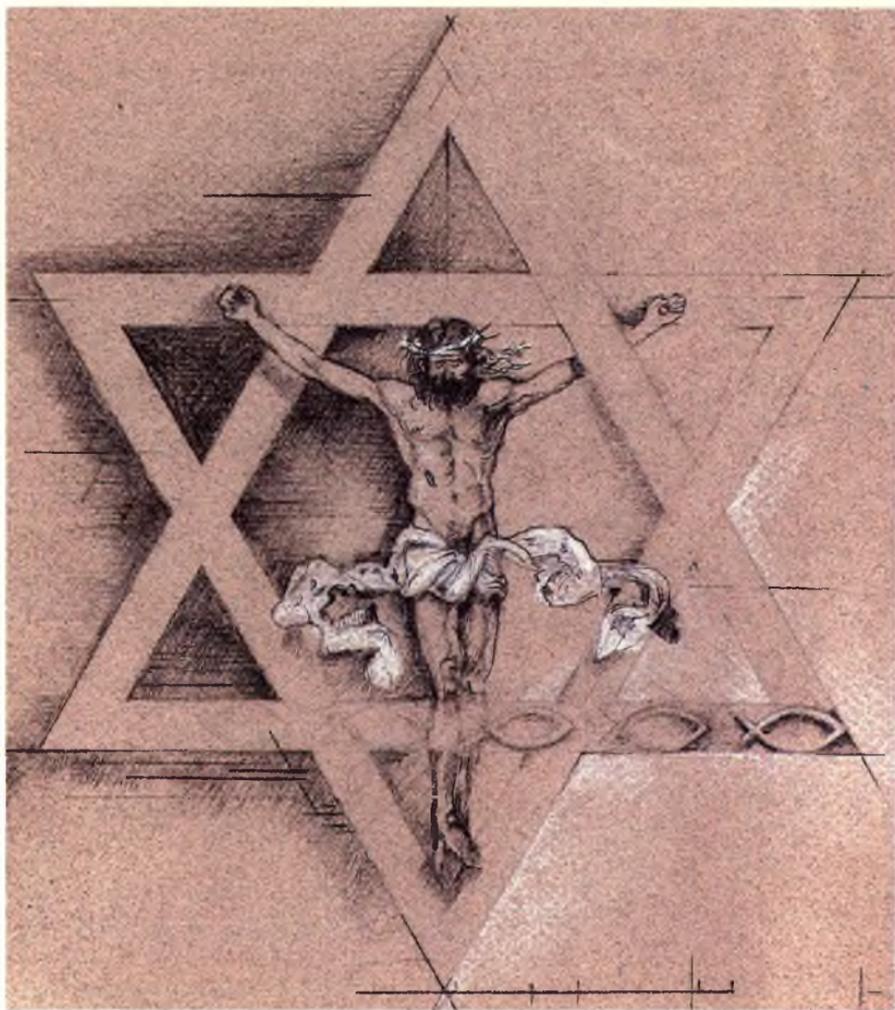


# COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

A General Conference Church Ministries Publication • October - December 1990

## Amazing Grace

### The Letter to the Romans



ΚΑΤΑ ΜΕΝ ΤΟ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΕΧΘΡΟΙ ΔΙ' ΥΜΑΣ ΚΑΤΑ ΔΕ ΤΗΝ ΕΚΛΟΓΗΝ  
ΑΓΑΠΗΤΟΙ ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥΣ ΠΑΤΕΡΑΣ ΑΜΕΤΑΜΕΛΗΤΑ ΓΑΡ ΤΑ ΧΑΡΙΣΜΑΤΑ ΚΑΙ  
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## **This Quarter's Artists**

The four artists for this quarter are from Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

Bruce Durrant, senior lecturer in art education, has been associated with many state and Adventist schools during his 36 years of teaching. During the past 13 years at Avondale College he has won recognition in the field of watercolor painting. He is also well known for the Avondale College church emblem and the large stained-glass window in the Victorian Conference chapel.

Peter Connolly and Christopher Hawken are graduates (B.Ed. with an art major) of the 1989 class, and Peter Rayner is in his third year of the B.Ed. program, majoring in art.

The diverse thought and varied styles of this quartet of artists illustrate Durrant's belief that art is a personal expression of the individual. His great hope is that the church will learn to appreciate more the valuable contribution art can make to the spread of the gospel.

The scriptural references and Bible versions used in the artwork for this quarter are as follows: cover and lesson 9, Romans 11:28-30; lesson 1, 8:2, NIV; lesson 2, 2:11, RSV; lesson 3, 5:8, NIV; lesson 11, 14:7, 8; and lesson 12, 15:13, RSV.

# Getting the Most Out of the Collegiate Quarterly

## Facts You Should Know

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is based on the conviction that there is transforming power in the Word of God and that one important way of tapping into that power is through group study. It is prepared with Adventist college students and young adults particularly in mind. Its purpose is to provide this group with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed together each week in Sabbath School.

Additionally, many who use the adult quarterly find that the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY, since it deals with the same topics as the adult, enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist colleges and universities, along with young-adult church groups, work together in producing the quarterly. The writing at each school is coordinated by the campus chaplain's office. Approximately 200 individuals contribute to the quarterly each year.

Circulation of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is about 25,000.

## Pointers for Study

1. The Bible passage to be studied for each week is indicated in bold type on the introduction page (Sunday's lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give you an overview of the lesson.

2. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the Logos pages (Monday's lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread the Bible passages indicated in the bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

3. Read the remainder of the sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

4. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

**Introduction** (Sunday) is designed to get your attention and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

**Logos** (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

**Testimony** (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

**Evidence** (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective. It is likely to be the most scholarly article of the week.

**How-To** (Thursday) discusses what the "theory" in the lesson means for day-to-day living.

**Opinion** (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

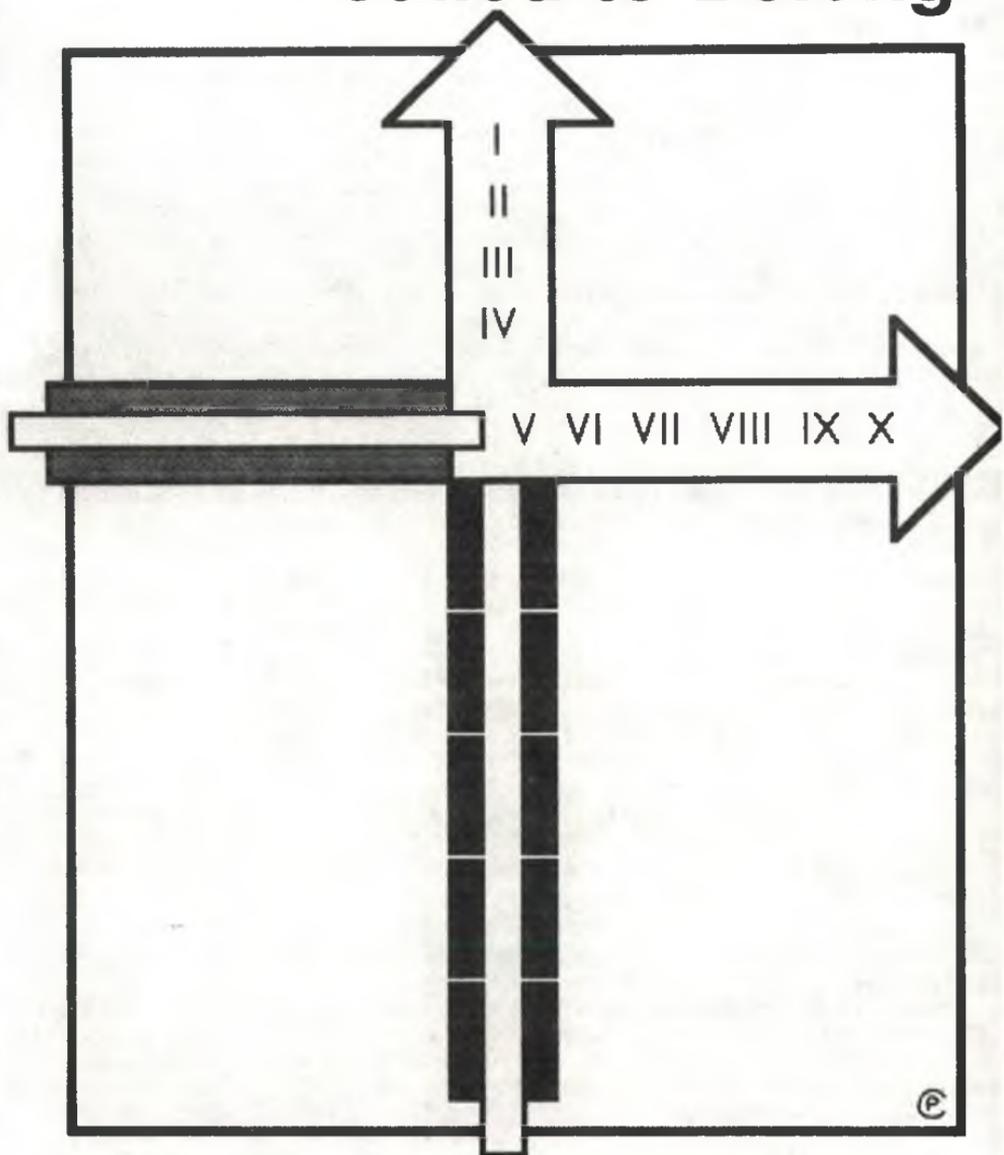
5. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

## The CQ and the Church

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.* Particularly in the Evidence and Opinion sections, views that are only individual opinion, not official denominational positions, are expressed.

Lesson 1, September 30—October 6

# Called to Belong



---

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation for everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Rom. 1:16, NIV).

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Sunday, September 30

# The Divine Excuse

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## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 1

---

Paul pulls no punches in his opening address to the church in Rome. Despite God's every attempt to reveal Himself to us, we have willfully ignored Him, and so by the law we stand condemned.

It is ironic that Paul so carefully argues the fact that we are without excuse (see Rom. 1:18-25, NIV), for back in verse 13 the apostle has just used the oldest excuse in the book for not visiting the Romans well before his writing them. "I really wanted to be with you," he seems to be saying, "but I've been just too busy."

You know, that's one of my favorite excuses. I can think of some others that jostle for the opportunity to glide off my tongue: "Look, I'd love to take the Sabbath School lesson for you, but we're going to be away that weekend," or "Darling, you know how much I want to wash the car this afternoon, but we've got that picnic tomorrow—you don't want it to rain, do you?"

The best part about my excuses is that they are so plausible. (Doesn't it always rain after you've washed your car?) Yet when my students come pleading for an extension on the day their major paper is due, I generally find their excuses ludicrous! They seem just as far-fetched as those below made to an insurance company by claimants involved in

motor-vehicle accidents:

"The wheel alignment had not been done properly, so that when I turned around to yell at the children, the car swerved all over the road."

"Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have."

"I had been driving for 40 years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident." (I wonder whether Moses thought of that one after striking the rock in the wilderness.)

"I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment."

"I was on my way to the doctor with rear-end trouble when my universal joint gave way, causing me to have an accident."

"I thought my side window was open, but it was up, as I found out when I put my head through it."\*

They sound pretty suspect, don't they? But then, other people's excuses generally do. Well, the message from Romans is that through faith one excuse is incontestable. For when at the end of time our great adversary discovers that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, he will choke, turn to the Lord, and protest, "You must be joking! Have you forgotten . . . ?" In response we will hear the divine excuse, "I am acquainted with all of their sins, but . . ."

---

\*Sandra Olsen, "Accident Excuses Stack Up," *Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney), July 30, 1989.

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by Calvin B. Durrant

Calvin B. Durrant teaches English at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Monday, October 1

## Good News!

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### LOGOS

Rom. 1:15, 16

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However you look at it, Romans is a theological letter. The apostle Paul was concerned not only with the essential question of salvation—what it means and how it is obtained—but also with the teachings of those who promoted a false means of salvation. Since he feared that these teachers might reach Rome with their message before he was able to make it to the capital, he wrote to the young church there.

Paul was proud to bring a simple gospel to the sophisticated center of the world empire. "I am not ashamed of the gospel" (Rom. 1:16, NIV). He gloried in the gospel and counted it a high honor to proclaim it. Verse 16 contains the theme of the whole letter—the application of the gospel to Christians (whether Jewish or Gentile) of Paul's day and ours.

The Gentiles needed salvation because they certainly were not righteous (chapter 1). The same was true of the Jews, though they thought they were righteous (chapter 2). Sin and guilt were universal; all came under its condemnation (chapter 3).

Paul's emphasis in chapter 1 is on the Gentiles (see verses 5, 6, 13-15, and 18-32). His concern is to demonstrate their need of salvation. In unmistakable terms (see verses 22, 23, 26, 27, and 29-31) he paints a picture of their

wickedness. The repeated words "God gave them over" (verses 24, 26, and 28) illustrate the depth of their degradation.

But it's not as though the Gentiles were entirely ignorant of God or His will for them. Paul spells it out: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (verse 20, NIV). Speaking of the Gentiles, Paul asserts, "What may be known about God is plain to them" (verse 19, NIV).

Paul's condemnation of the Gentiles (see verses 18 and 32) is certainly justified. They needed the "righteousness from God" (verse 17, NIV) revealed in the gospel. They could not hide behind their sophistication, culture, material possessions, or worldly power. They desperately needed to be "in the right" with God (i.e., to be justified).

In the Hebrew context (Paul's orientation) righteousness was not so much a moral quality as a legal status. People were righteous when they were declared righteous by God. Paul is saying to us today (as he said centuries ago) that when we accept by faith, or believe (see verse 16), what God has done for us in Christ, then God declares us righteous ("in the clear") in relation to Him. No wonder Paul was not ashamed to declare this good news!

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by Alwyn Salom

Alwyn Salom, chairman of the Theology Department, teaches New Testament at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Tuesday, October 2

# Called to Be an Apostle

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## TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 1:1, 16

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Paul felt called not only to belong to Christ but also to tell others the good news of the gospel. Today many of us are fully occupied with our own careers and interests, but should that prevent our total commitment to the cause of Christ?

"To him [Paul], as to every disciple of Christ, had been given the commission, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' In accepting Christ, Paul accepted this commission. He realized that upon him rested the obligation of laboring for all classes of men—for Jew and Gentile, for learned and unlearned, for those occupying high positions and for those in the most lowly walks of life. From a zealous persecutor of the followers of Christ, Paul became one of the Saviour's most devoted and effective workers. . . . Henceforth his life was wholly devoted to the crucified One."<sup>1</sup>

Why are we seemingly so reluctant to work for Christ? Is it necessary for each of us to go through some traumatic experience before we too sense a similar obligation?

It is not unusual for individuals to feel inadequate and refuse to accept responsibility for sharing their beliefs with others; but really, is this just an excuse?

"The responsibility of each human agent is measured by the

gifts he holds in trust. All are to be workers; but upon the worker who has had the greatest opportunities, the greatest clearness of mind in understanding the Scriptures, rests the highest responsibility. Every receiver should hold himself accountable to God, and use his talents for God's glory."<sup>2</sup>

Do you think that *everyone* who belongs to Christ has an obligation to share his or her beliefs with others? Does this necessarily mean an obligation to give Bible studies? How could *you* best witness for Christ?

"What the church needs today is an army of workers who, like Paul, have a deep experience in the things of God, and who are filled with an earnest desire to do His service. Cultivated, refined, sanctified men are needed; men who will not shun trial and responsibility; men who are burden-bearers; men who are brave and true; men in whose hearts Christ is formed, and who, with lips touched with holy fire, will preach the word to those who are starving for the bread of life. For the lack of such workers, the cause of God languishes."<sup>3</sup>

## REACT

Does Ellen White's seemingly sexist language reflect a cultural bias of her age? How may women contribute to the work of the gospel today?

---

1. *Review and Herald*, Apr. 4, 1912.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Youth's Instructor*, July 10, 1902.

---

by Eleanor M. Scale

Eleanor M. Scale is director of the Ellen G. White Research Centre at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

# “Ashamed to Whisper Such Tales”?

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## EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rom. 1:16

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The early Christians knew what it meant to have bad press. “Up to this moment,” Paul wrote in A.D. 57, “we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world” (1 Cor. 4:13, NIV).

In his book *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* Robert Wilken examines the opinions of five pagan authors about Christianity. The early Christian writers presented Jesus’ life and the church’s beginning as “the turning point in history.” But their pagan contemporaries saw Christianity as “a tiny, peculiar, anti-social, irreligious sect, drawing its adherents from the lower strata of society.”<sup>1</sup>

One hostile philosopher, Celsus, wrote a major book against the Christians. He didn’t mind if people worshiped Zeus or Dionysus, or even sheep or crocodiles. But Christians insisted on elevating their Founder to divine status, thus challenging the popular belief in one high God; and their doctrine of salvation conflicted with the religious ideas of Greece and Rome. Hence their faith threatened the role of the emperor and the stability of society. Celsus used his sharp wit devastatingly against Christians:

“Everywhere they speak in their writings of the tree of life and the resurrection of the flesh

by the tree—I imagine because their master was nailed to a cross and was a carpenter by trade. So that if he had happened to be thrown off a cliff, or pushed into a pit, or suffocated by strangling, or if he had been a cobbler or stonemason or blacksmith, there would have been a cliff of life above the heavens, or a pit of resurrection, or a rope of immortality, or a blessed stone, or an iron of love, or a holy hide of leather. Would not an old woman who sings a story to lull a little child to sleep have been ashamed to whisper such tales as these?”<sup>2</sup>

Paul was unashamed of his message. Epithets like “scum” and “refuse” didn’t faze him. A century later, Celsus dismissed Christians as “wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers, and the most illiterate and bucolic yokels.”<sup>3</sup> But Christianity became “the most extensive and universal religion in history.”<sup>4</sup>

## REACT

1. Do Christians in 1990 face problems similar to those encountered by the early Christians? Give reasons for your answer.

2. How can we confront our problems so that, like Paul, we are “not ashamed of the gospel”?

---

1. Robert Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984), p. xv.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

4. David B. Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 3.

---

by Arthur N. Patrick

Arthur N. Patrick is the registrar at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Thursday, October 4

# Fulfillment in Belonging

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## HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 1:16

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As a youth attending a small Adventist school and later a state university, I perceived Christianity as being—well, rather “airy-fairy” and impractical. As a result I was reticent to let my friends know that I was a Christian. I imagine that at that time I was like many young people today. Yet to Paul the gospel of Christ was a badge of honor, for he declared that he was “not ashamed of the gospel” (Rom. 1:16, NIV).

Can Christianity be as relevant to the youth of today as it was to Paul? In an attempt to find an answer, let us view Christ as Paul may have seen Him and project that view to our time.

Luke, Paul’s companion and confidant, wrote of Christ as a person vitally concerned with the people of His time, a person who reached into all facets of society. In fact, the Christ of Luke’s Gospel did not necessarily conform to social expectations but lived according to His own values gained by continual prayer contact with God. In so doing, He often annoyed the leaders of His

day. He showed a new respect for women (see Luke 8:1-3), accepted those who were racially or culturally different (see 7:1-9; 17:11-19), healed those with socially repugnant diseases (see 5:12-14), and complimented caring or wholesome attitudes in whatever unlikely place He might find them (see 10:30-37; 7:5-10).

I believe that if the Christ of Paul and Luke were suddenly to materialize in today’s world, we would be surprised by His life and work. I could see Him participating in social or humanitarian concerns such as working for hunger relief, caring for AIDS victims, and befriending street children and addicts. Nothing “airy-fairy” or impractical would characterize either His attitude or work.

I believe that those who wish to be like Christ and bear His name should be a caring people who would neither seek merely a life of comfort nor make religion a matter of convenience, but who would actively share His concerns. When this happens, Christianity becomes meaningful, and youthful Christians can join with Paul in saying, “I am not ashamed of the gospel” (Rom. 1:16, NIV).

---

by Cedric Greive

Cedric Greive teaches education at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

# How Good Is the "Second Book"?

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## OPINION

**Key Text: Rom. 1:19, 20**

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"Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Rom. 1:19, 20, NIV).

Paul, in his enthusiasm, seems to be overstating the value of the natural world as a source of information about God. On the other hand, it may be that we read into Paul's statement more than he actually intended.

The way I see it, the value of creation as a source of spiritual understanding is mostly in retrospect. Using nature as our primary source, we do not learn much about God. Rather, we use nature to illustrate our preconceived spiritual ideas. For example, the parable of the growing seed (see Mark 4:26-29) is often used to illustrate spiritual growth, but would we deduce that from observation without foreknowledge?

What can we learn about God from nature? J. B. S. Haldane once sarcastically observed that, since there are many more species of beetles than of mammals,

God must be inordinately fond of beetles. Paul, however, says only that nature testifies to God's eternal power and divine nature—nothing more.

Contemplating the sea and the sky, drifting anthropologist Thor Heyerdahl was moved to write: "In a city man may feel second to none. But alone in the immensity of the universe . . . even a most fervent atheist will wonder if Darwin found the visible road but not the invisible mechanism." Nevertheless, to my knowledge, Heyerdahl remains agnostic.

In addition to his many trials, Job suffered some divine sarcasm. God said to him, "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!" (Job 38:4, 5, NIV). The upshot of this God-speech is that just as we don't understand the natural world and its origin, so we don't understand the spiritual world and its workings (Job was not given an explanation). But as we trust that the natural world is under God's control, so we must trust Him in the spiritual realm.

Then perhaps Paul's meaning is this: God obviously exists—obey Him. God, through His Spirit and His Word, helps us to see illustrations of the spiritual from the natural, but we will not, by unaided searching, find out God.

---

by Howard J. Fisher

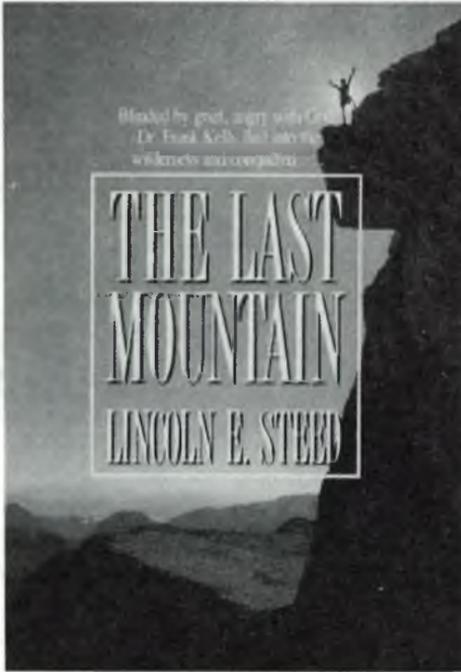
Howard J. Fisher teaches physical geography and biology at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

## REACT

1. Do you accept the hypothesis that nature does not reveal much about God? Why or why not?
2. Why might we have diffi-

culty reading the "second book"? See *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 17-19, and *Education*, pp. 99-102.

\*Thor Heyerdahl, *The Tigris Expedition: In Search of Our Beginnings* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), p. 299.



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Lesson 2, October 7 - 13

# Why Do People Need God?



M. Bruce Durant.

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“For God does not show favoritism” (Rom. 2:11, NIV).

---

Sunday, October 7

# People Need the Lord—or Do They?

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## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 2

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What do I tell Laura?

She's a gorgeous, 20-year-old New Zealander who served as a student missionary in a Nepalese leper colony. Having fed these people, wiped their faces, and bathed their babies, she desperately wants them in heaven. She questions, "Will they be saved, even if they never accept Jesus?"

I'd love to answer, "Yes, God is understanding"—because that would take the pressure off us to spread the gospel.

But can God save people without the gospel? If so, when Jesus groaned, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me" (Matt. 26:39), God would have found an easier plan. But there is no alternative. Only the gospel. That's why Jesus didn't say, "I am a way," but "I am the way . . . : no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

So there are people today "without Christ, . . . having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

God gives a light penalty to those who couldn't know,<sup>1</sup> but ignorance costs eternal life. If I

hate that fact, how much more must God?

Few pagans come to know God through nature; few have His law written on their hearts.<sup>2</sup> They need to be told about the salvation available in Jesus. And their acceptance of that salvation depends on the quality of our witness (see Rom. 10:14).

What if they equate Jesus with an overfed Westerner, with Coke and camera, ready to photograph the squalor for the folks back home? What if they know that a "Christian" country spends more on whiskey or cosmetics than on foreign aid, yet is smug about its superior culture? Truly, the name of Christ is blasphemed among the pagans because of us (see Rom. 2:24). Do they need a god made in our Western image when they already have 20,000 of their own? No, they need just Jesus.

If I say, "People are lost without Jesus," then Laura will say, with big, quiet eyes, "Well, why doesn't every Christian go and witness—or at least give to the limit of his resources if he can't go?"

I can't answer that. Can you?

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1. Luke 12:47, 48; *Early Writings*, p. 276.

2. Rom. 1:19, 20; 2:14, 15; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 638; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 376; and *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 385.

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by Grenville Kent

Grenville Kent is a senior theology student at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

# Do We Need God's Salvation?

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## LOGOS

### Rom. 2

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The earliest review of Paul's letters is found in 2 Peter 3:15, 16. Even Peter felt constrained to say that "there are some things in them hard to understand" (verse 16, RSV). While some parts of Romans 2 are hard to understand, the main outline of Paul's argument is clear. Between Romans 1:18 and 3:20 Paul is concerned to show that *all* humankind is under the just condemnation of God. *All* men and women, both Jew and Greek, need salvation from their human predicament, the predicament of sin. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (3:23, RSV).

### God Attacks Hypocrisy (read Rom. 2:1-10)

In Romans 1:18-32 Paul has shown that all the Gentiles are condemned before God. Any Jewish reader would have been familiar and comfortable with these criticisms of the Gentile world. In Romans 2:1-10 Paul turns to discuss the Jews and their relationship to the law (cf. verse 17). The problem with them is that they know the law and condemn others for breaking it, but they themselves do the same. As Paul says, "Do you [Jews] suppose . . . you will escape the judgment of God?" (verse 3, RSV).

*When we recognize hypocrisy in others, do we also stand con-*

*demned for hypocrisy? Why or why not?*

Paul goes on to point out that God's sure and violent judgment is about to fall upon *all* sinners. This aspect of the presentation of the gospel is often over-emphasized (at the expense of God's love) or underemphasized (at the expense of God's retributive justice). But it is a strong theme in the teachings of Jesus, Paul, and John the revelator, and it cannot be left out of any presentation of Paul's thought or, indeed, of the gospel. It is the other side of the revelation of God's righteousness. On the one hand, God's righteousness gives salvation to those who believe (see 1:16, 17); on the other, it brings wrath on those who disobey (see verse 18; 2:5).

*Does Romans 2:7, 13 contradict Romans 3:20? Is it possible to keep God's law perfectly, or can we only approximate this? What does Romans 3:23 have to say about this?*

### The Gentiles and the Law (read Rom. 2:12-16)

While it is possible to consider that Paul contradicts himself in this passage (the scholar Heikki Raisanen argues that Paul does), it is not necessary to do so. Paul's point appears to be that on any basis (both in the case of lack of knowledge of the law, and of knowledge of it that results only in its transgression) all are con-

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by Robert K. Mclver

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demned and in need of salvation (see Rom. 3:23). A person might be justified by keeping the law perfectly, but no one except Jesus has ever done this. Only through faith in Jesus can anyone be saved, because relying on our own works will lead only to condemnation in the judgment.

Paul's basic point is that by following their conscience, Gentiles can at times keep the law better

than those (the Jews) who know and respect the law. This condemns any Jew who might claim righteousness on the basis of keeping the law.

*Is Paul's message that all stand condemned still relevant today? Why or why not? Does this make a suitable starting point in dialoguing with non-Christians? Why or why not?*

# Spurning God's Kindness

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## TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 2:4

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The thrust of Romans 2 is radically disturbing: respectable people need the gospel no less than the corrupt and the depraved. Yet despite its severity, this chapter already foreshadows the "riches" of God's kindness (Rom. 2:4, NIV), one of the central themes of Paul's letter.

"Grace is an attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings. We did not seek for it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow His grace upon us, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our only claim to His mercy is our great need."<sup>1</sup>

"He does not ask if we are worthy of His love, but He pours upon us the riches of His love, to make us worthy."<sup>2</sup>

Read Ephesians 1:3, 7, 8; 2:1-7; and Jeremiah 31:3.

*Can we show contempt for the riches of God's kindness? How?*

"The love of our heavenly Father in the gift of His only-begotten Son to the world is enough to inspire every soul, to melt every hard, loveless heart into contrition and tenderness; and yet shall heavenly intelligences see in those for whom Christ died, insensibility to His love, hardness of heart, and no response of gratitude and affection

to the Giver of all good things?"<sup>3</sup>

*How do we persuade someone of his need for the gospel? Does the warning tone of Romans 2:4, 5 come as a surprise?*

"The forbearance of God is continually presumed upon and His mercy abused."<sup>4</sup> "We should beware of treating lightly God's gracious provisions for our salvation."<sup>5</sup> "No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of his children, as is God with those He seeks to save,"<sup>6</sup> but "let none deceive themselves with the thought that God, in His great love and mercy, will yet save even the rejecters of His grace."<sup>7</sup>

Read Hebrews 2:3 and 10:29.

*Analyze the different ways in which love and justice are related in Romans 2:4, 5; 3:21-26; 8:3, 4; 9:14-16; and 11:22.*

"It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice. . . . But Christ shows that in God's plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."<sup>8</sup>

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1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 181.

2. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 22.

3. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 198.

4. *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 139.

5. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 162.

6. *Steps to Christ*, p. 35.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

8. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

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by John Cox

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Wednesday, October 10

# Finishing the Work?

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## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Rom. 10:14**

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Statistics can benumb. More than five billion people inhabit our earth, yet only a little more than six million are Seventh-day Adventists. That is a mere .12 percent! Only about a third of the world's people are Christian. Possibly as many as two billion people have not even heard Christ's name, let alone possess knowledge of Him. Of course, it is arrogant and incorrect to think that only Adventists can take the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. However, central to our own self-understanding as Adventists is the objective of "finishing the work." But even in countries such as the United States and Australia, where Adventism is numerically and institutionally strong, surveys show that few have heard of us. Those who actually know what we believe are even fewer.

The problem of "finishing the work" is compounded by two further factors: (1) the huge number of unreached people in areas such as China and the Islamic nations; (2) the mathematics of world-population growth. Each year 140 million new people appear on Planet Earth! Humanly speaking, the task seems impossible. How will they ever come to know and accept Christ as their Saviour? What will happen to them if they never hear? Does

it really matter if they do not hear?

It does matter. The clear message of the book of Romans is that all of humanity lacks righteousness. The bad pagan (see Rom. 1:18-32) is clearly unrighteous, but so too is the good Jew (see 2:1). Doubtless Paul's Jewish readers were startled to discover that they too were unrighteous (see verses 17-29). Indeed, all are condemned in God's sight (see 3:23). Consequently, all need to hear of Jesus and His salvation.

But perhaps in another sense it does not matter. When we get down to the essentials, God seems extremely interested in our treatment of others. Numerous texts indicate this—for example, Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 10:25-37, and James 1:27. This is the litmus test of our relationship with God, even if we are ignorant of Him. On this basis the pagans who have never formally heard of Christ can acknowledge God (see Rom. 1:19). All can persist "in doing good" (2:7, NIV). In this sense we can all "finish the work."

## REACT

1. Can we "finish the work"? Defend your position.
2. Does birthplace, social position, or race improve one's chances of salvation? Why or why not?
3. Will people who never heard of Christ and His gospel while here on earth be in heaven? Why or why not?

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by Harwood Lockton

Harwood Lockton is a senior lecturer in geography at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Thursday, October 11

# Dealing With Hypocrisy

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## HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 2:24

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Nobody likes hypocrisy. Jesus' most scathing denunciations were reserved for hypocrisy; the apostles attacked it with vigor, and subsequent generations of believers have regarded it with appropriate abhorrence. Even people not ordinarily considered religious deplore hypocrisy. Repeated surveys have shown that when non-churchgoers are asked why they do not go to church, the statement "There are too many hypocrites in the church" features prominently among their explanations.

Probably nonchurchgoers tend to overestimate the number of hypocrites in the church, but even if we allow for substantial exaggeration, the fact remains that hypocrisy is by no means uncommon. And history suggests that this has ever been the case. In the Middle Ages, for example, the most outspoken followers of the Prince of Peace were generally among the first to take up the sword on His behalf; church dignitaries who were loudest in condemning covetousness were frequently the most diligent in acquiring riches; and many who took vows of celibacy were among those who took concubines as well.

Hypocrisy should not be taken lightly, for, as the apostle Paul has pointed out, when it exists within the church it gives cause for unbelievers to blaspheme the name of

God. So what can present-day Christians do to combat this evil?

1. *We must start with ourselves, particularly if we are in any way predisposed toward fault-finding.* Paul suggests that the very faults we discern in other people are the ones we are most likely to possess ourselves. So if we feel that there is much hypocrisy in the church, we should consider the possibility that we ourselves are making at least a modest contribution to the total.

2. *To minimize this possibility, we must avoid all tendencies toward self-sufficiency and the feelings of pride and superiority that self-sufficiency brings.* True, we live in an age of do-it-yourself, and in some areas there is much to be said for this practice, but we must remind ourselves that in some areas do-it-yourself simply does not work, religion being a prime example. True religion, the kind that is proof against hypocrisy, centers on Christ, not self.

3. *In dealing with others, we must remember that example is usually more effective than rebuke.*

## REACT

1. Is hypocrisy more commonly found in church or nonchurch circles? Explain.

2. In view of Paul's warnings against judging others, is it ever safe to confront people directly with evidence of hypocrisy? Why or why not?

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by Donald E. Hansen

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Friday, October 12

# Models of Salvation?

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## OPINION

Key Texts: Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60

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In the book of Romans Paul explains God's way of averting the mass extermination of humanity because of sin. Since Christ Himself died the second death, thereby paying the debt to the law, the sinner who truly avails himself of the provision can go free, acquitted.

Some speculate that this view of justice typifies stage 4 of moralist Kohlberg's postulated six stages of moral reasoning.<sup>2</sup> At stage 1, anticipation of reward or punishment largely motivates behavior. Small children operate at this level. Justice consists in obedience by the weak to the authority imposed by the strong. It is possible to understand God's dealings with the Israelites after the Exodus in this light.

At stage 2, justice becomes an exchange of favors or forfeits. Is it possible that the strong covenant theme in the Old Testament represents such morality?

Acceptance of the conventions and standards of the group characterizes stages 3 and 4, the conventional levels. About 75 percent of adults remain at these levels. Here, rightness consists in obeying recognized laws. Justice is a matter of rewarding those who obey and punishing those who don't. Disobedience is seen to create a tangible debt against the offended law.

In contrast, an appreciation of

universal moral values directs the behavior of those at stages 5 and 6. From this perspective justice becomes more than a mere legal transaction.

Not surprisingly, someone has suggested a model of the atonement for each of these stages. For a stage 1 thinker Christ has, through His death, placated God's wrath. At stage 2 God makes a deal, and Christ dies instead of the sinner. For a conventional thinker (one at stage 3 or 4), man's sin has created a debt that, fortunately, Christ has transferred to Himself.

The concern of the thinker at stage 5 or 6 is less with punishment or payment of a debt than with rehabilitation of offenders wherever possible. He sees that God has done all He can to make clear the nature of right and wrong and to point out the natural, inevitable consequences of sin. For him, then, Christ's life has great significance as a demonstration of God's system, and His death unmasked Satan's alternative.

## REACT

1. Is man more moral than God?
2. Is it mixing apples and oranges to draw parallels between the biblical plan of salvation and postulates on human moral development? Why or why not?

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1. J. K. Testerman, "Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development: Implications for Theology." Unpublished manuscript.

2. L. Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 17-22.

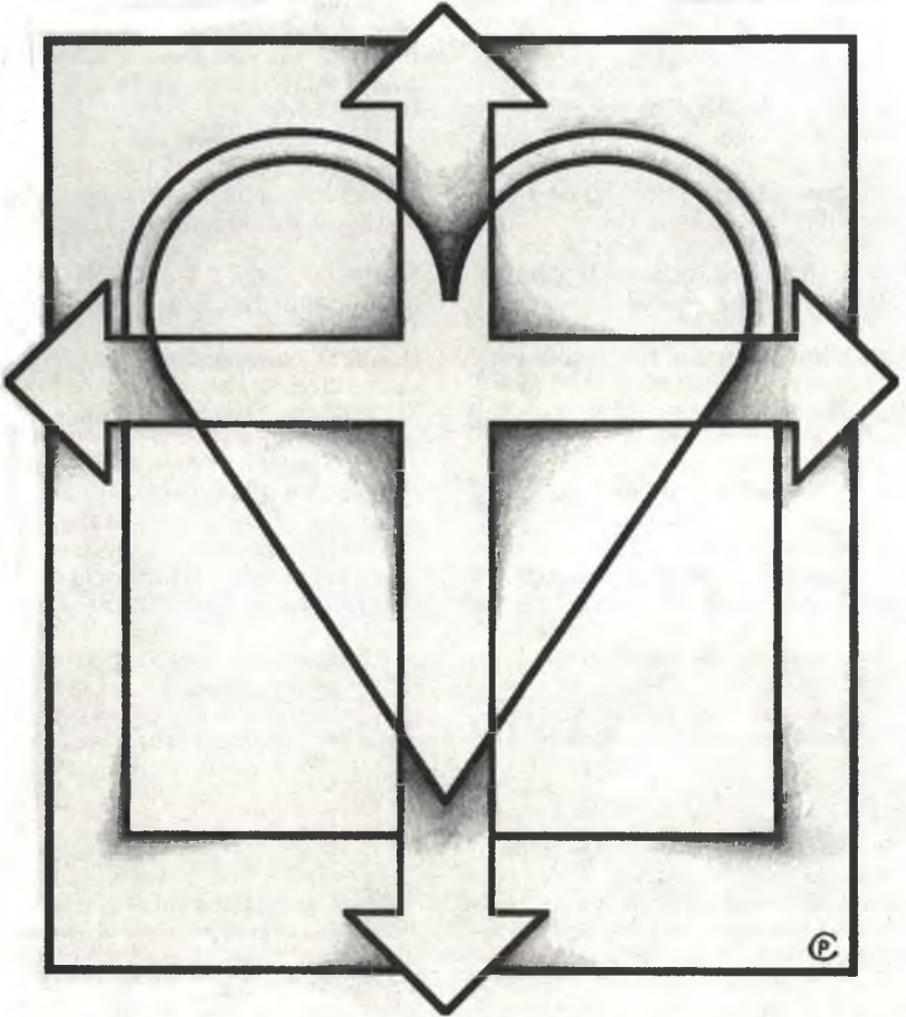
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by Lynden Rogers

Lynden Rogers lectures in physics at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

Lesson 3, October 14 - 20

# To All Who Believe



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“God has done this to demonstrate his righteousness both by the wiping out of the sins of the past (the time when he withheld his hand), and by showing in the present time that he is a just God and that he justifies every man who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26, Phillips).

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Sunday, October 14

# Is God a Seventh-day Adventist?

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## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 3, 4

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"AIDS is God's special curse upon the homosexual community. Through the AIDS virus God wants to demonstrate His condemnation of sodomy, prostitution, and drug addiction."

A host of prominent evangelicals has trumpeted these sentiments, and many within the Christian church feel morally vindicated as they watch the AIDS epidemic ravage its victims. While no one blatantly says, "I told you so!" the implication is clear. God curses those who disobey the rules, and rewards the good guys, who do it "right." Therefore, if we contract AIDS, we really only get what we deserve, right?

The idea of being loved when we're good and punished when we're bad is not new. The ancient Greeks told the story of Admetus,\* a handsome and noble young king who possessed excellent qualities of character. When he fell sick with an incurable disease, the oracle of Apollo said that it would prove fatal unless someone would consent to die for him, in which case he would live forever.

His friends went everywhere, inquiring whether anyone was willing to die for Admetus. But while everyone agreed that he was a wonderful young king, neither his parents nor his friends were willing to pay the ransom.

Finally they approached Admetus's wife, the beautiful and devoted Alcestis. She decided at once to save him. Because he was such a good man and because the world needed him, she was prepared to die in his place.

Such heroic self-sacrifice was the ancients' most sublime idea of love. Imagine their astonishment when Paul wrote, "Perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. . . . [He died] while we were enemies" (Rom. 5:7-10, RSV).

Sinners? Enemies?

"Oh, no!" protested Abraham's chosen race. "God is Jewish. He belongs to us."

"Ah, but He's a Seventh-day Adventist now," we retort. "We've been given more light, and now He resides with us."

Really, but aren't we sinners too?

"Well, we're very straight, conservative, health-reforming, tithing, Sabbath-keeping people. I mean, none of us have AIDS!"

But what if the virus were spread by gossip, lies, selfishness, or pride? Who'd be unaffected then?

You see, like Admetus, we're all riddled with a deadly disease called sin, which was incurable until a ransom was paid.

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\*One version of this story is told in Euripides' *Alcestis*.

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by Bronwyn Koncz

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# How to Obtain the Righteousness of God and Keep It

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## LOGOS Rom. 3, 4

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### The Advantages of Being Jewish (read Rom. 3:1-8)

*"Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?" (verse 1, RSV).*

Patriotic hymns and expressions often express a parochial pride. Consider, for example, "Rule Britannia," "Vive la France," "Advance Australia Fair," "America the Beautiful," "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles," and "O Canada." Popular anthems often invoke a special blessing from God: "God Bless America" or "God Defend New Zealand." The Epistle to the Romans in general and chapters 3 and 4 in particular dismiss the validity of the ubiquitous national pride that centers its confidence in the superiority of a particular culture.

The frequent repetition in Romans 3 and 4 of words that contrast national identities indicates the theme of these chapters: *nations* (four times), *Jew[s]* (three times), *Greeks* (one time), *circumcision* (eight times), and *uncircumcision* (seven times). In chapters 3 and 4 Paul counters Jewish unbelief by arguing that it was God's purpose to include the Gentiles in the covenant. God had kept faith with Israel despite the

nation's sins, so why, Paul demands, should His grace exclude Gentiles? Israel's own experience of God's saving righteousness toward her sins ought to have prepared her for the redemptive event of Christ's death that reached even to Gentile sinners.

Of course, the fact that universal human sinfulness serves to show the extent of God's indiscriminate grace does not excuse human sin (see 3:5), nor does it deny God's ultimate judgment of those who despise His grace (see verse 6). Human unbelief can neither create nor destroy God's forgiveness (see verses 3, 4), but it can prevent it achieving its purpose to restore our relationship with God and with one another.

Vincent Donovan's response to a Masai warrior who asked him whether his American tribe had found the God of Abraham is a sobering comment on the theme of these chapters:

"I sat there for a long time in silence looking at the Masai people. They called their god Engai. Well, that is no more strange-sounding than our gods. The god invoked by the pope to bless the troops of Mussolini about to embark on the plunder of Ethiopia, and the god invoked by an American cardinal to bless the soldiers of Christ in Vietnam, and the god of French glory, and the German god of Hitler were no

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by Norman H. Young

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more the High God of Scripture than is Diana of the Ephesians or Engai of the Masai of East Africa.<sup>21</sup>

### **God's Way With Sinners (read Rom. 3:9-26, RSV)**

*"For no human being will be justified in his sight by works of the law since through the law comes the knowledge of sin" (verse 20, RSV).*

Historically the Jews (as God's chosen people) had certain privileges vis-à-vis the Gentiles. But no one gains a right relationship with God simply by having the external identity of a Jew (see 2:28, 29), that is, by "works of the law," for such marks are only the sign of a relationship, not the substance of it (see 4:11). One must emphasize that "works of the law" are *not* the same as *doing* the law or *fulfilling* the law (see 2:27); "works of the law" are *not* the same as "the work of the law written in their hearts" (verse 15) or "the circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit" (verse 29, NIV). "Works of the law" are rather something more superficial, at the level of "the letter" (verses 27 and 29), an outward mark indicative of ethnic solidarity (see verse 28), something more limited than the "patient continuance in doing good" (verse 7, NKJV).<sup>22</sup>

The pandemic proportions of human sin (see 3:19, 20, RSV) met in the death of Jesus a revelation of God's saving righteousness (see verses 21-26) that obliterated any ethnic validity for belonging to the community of God. No nation can claim superior morality before God, nor can any individual, "for there is no distinction" (verse 22, RSV). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (verse 23, NIV). A proper relationship with God is a divine gift, and faith accepts that God has acted in the death of Christ to neutralize the alienating poten-

tial of the history and present depth of human sin (see verse 25).

*Must one possess the appropriate social identity markers (educated, middle-class Western male) or the opposite in order to belong to the Christian community? Why or why not? (Read 1 Cor. 1:26-29; cf. Rom. 4:17.)*

### **Why God's Righteousness Excludes Our Boasting (read Rom. 3:27; 4:12)**

*"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith" (3:27, NKJV).*

Judaism interpreted the law of Moses as marking Israel out as the exclusive recipients of God's blessing. But rightly understood, the law revealed a God who confronted human sin with a non-parochial forgiveness: "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven." . . . Is this blessing pronounced only upon the circumcised, or also upon the uncircumcised?" (4:7-9, RSV). Since Abraham was blessed while uncircumcised, Paul argues that the blessing of divine forgiveness extends to uncircumcised Gentiles. Thus, the law stops every mouth from vain boasting (see 3:19) and points (see verse 21) to a God who is "no respecter of persons"—"Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also" (verse 29, RSV).

### **A New Family Name for Every Refugee (read Rom. 4:13-21)**

*"Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all" (verse 16, NIV).*

War creates masses of displaced persons and refugees, their heritage and identity lost. But all

humans are wandering persons without an identity. Faith provides all of us with the opportunity to regain our true identity. God promised that Abraham would be the father of many nations (see verses 17, 18); through the gospel of Christ that promise has been fulfilled, and Abraham has become the father of all who believe, Gentile as well as Jew (see verses 11, 12, 16). Thus, despite human trespasses God has given us all a new heritage through the death and resurrec-

tion of Christ (see verses 24, 25).

*What dangers confront a community that sees itself as a unique last-day prophetic movement?*

*How does the righteousness of God, manifested in the atoning death of Christ (see Rom. 3:25), destroy our perverted pride and ethnocentricity?*

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1. Vincent J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered* (London: SCM Press, 1982), p. 46.

2. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, eds., *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), vol. 38, *Romans 1-8*, by James D. G. Dunn, pp. 158, 159.

# Justification . . . and Then?

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## TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 3:20-23, 31

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"What is justification by faith?" asked Ellen White. "The work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself. When men see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

In Romans 3:10-18 Paul effectively laid the glory of human achievement in the dust. He knew that only a mind and heart convicted of unrighteousness could begin to treasure the precious gift of Christ's own righteousness. Perhaps, by His grace and through the blessing of a loving home, we have never committed murder, adultery, or other anti-social acts. Can we not still feel our need of a Saviour? Ellen White assuredly felt that need when she wrote, "All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin."<sup>2</sup>

"Only as we see our utter helplessness and renounce all self-trust, shall we lay hold on divine power."<sup>3</sup> Ellen White understood, as did Paul and Abraham, that the prelude to justification is faith. "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6, NIV).

Again Ellen White reminds us that "it was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's

law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God."<sup>4</sup>

What of life after justification? "The righteousness which Christ taught is conformity of heart and life to the revealed will of God."<sup>5</sup> Jesus taught by example. In the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed, "Not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39, NIV). Is it possible that Jesus wants us there with Him at Gethsemane, totally committed to conformity to the revealed will of God? Romans 8:17 suggests He does. What implication does that have for us as Christians? Is this what Paul meant when he urged us to offer our bodies as "living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (12:1, NIV)?

"Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law" (3:31, NIV).

## REACT

How does our life reveal whether we, like Abraham, are fully persuaded that God has power to do what He has promised (see Rom. 4:21)?

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1. *The Faith I Live By*, p. 111.
  2. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 364.
  3. *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 316.
  4. *Steps to Christ*, p. 62.
  5. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

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by Sherida Carrick

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Wednesday, October 17

# Abraham: Father of the Faithful?

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## EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rom. 4:1-3

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Could Paul have found a better example than Abraham to illustrate his point that a person "is justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rom. 3:28, RSV)? You don't have to be too much of a cynic to question Abraham's performance on two fronts: frequently he did not have much faith, and he did not always uphold the moral principles of the law. So, why Abraham?

Paul's argument rests on the episode in Abraham's life recorded in Genesis 15:1-6, which climaxes in the statement that "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (verse 6, NIV). It is not difficult to see why Paul's mind latched onto this statement when he wanted a scriptural illustration to support his argument concerning justification. However, if we take the time to consider how Genesis presents Abraham, we will better see what Abraham's "belief" and "righteousness" amounted to.

In Genesis 12-14 Abraham comes across as a "Jekyll and Hyde" personality. No sooner had he faithfully obeyed the Lord's command to leave his country and relatives (see 12:1-4) than, in an effort to save his own skin, he passed off his wife Sarai as his sister, who then disappeared into

Pharaoh's harem (see verses 10-15). It is unlikely that Pharaoh would have seen Sarai as a one-night stand; as far as Abraham knew, he would never see his wife again. So God had to intervene in order to rescue Sarai from the dilemma created by her husband. Who among us would be willing to write a character reference for Abraham at this stage of his life? And if we did, what would we say?

By the time we come to Genesis 15 we're not sure what to make of Abraham, who appears to be a strange mixture of virtues and vices. Nevertheless, despite the reservations we might have about his morality, we do feel sorry for the fellow.

At the outset God had promised him that he would become the father of a great nation. Here we are four chapters later, and he was the father of—nothing. So when God announced, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward" (verse 1, NIV), we can hear Abraham's exasperation when he replied, "O Sovereign Lord, *what* can you give me . . . ? . . . You have given me no children" (verses 2, 3, NIV).

Abraham was obviously having a hard time believing God's promise. God replied by first repeating the promise that he would have a son (see verse 4) and then by telling him that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars (see verse 5). In response, "Abram believed the Lord, and he

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by Laurence Turner

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credited it to him as righteousness" (verse 6, NIV).

Now, this is most peculiar. Abraham had doubted God's original promise. So God simply repeated the promise—and Abraham believed. Why did Abraham move from doubt to faith? God had given him no hard evidence that the promise would be fulfilled. The reason must be that Abraham had shifted his focus from the promise and had "come to rely on the promise speaker. He [had] now permitted God to be not a hypothesis about the future, but the voice around which his life [was] organized."<sup>4</sup> He believed in God at a time when he had no tangible evidence for doing so. He didn't even have the physical symbol of circumcision to act as a prop to his faith (see Rom. 4:10). He put his trust, not in a promise, certainly not in a law, but in God Himself.

However, if we expect Abraham's life to be radically changed from this point on, we will be disappointed. Abraham's faith did not consistently triumph

over all temptation. Two chapters later in Genesis he again doubted the promise of a son (see 17:17), and in chapter 20 he even tried the "she's not my wife, she's my sister" routine once more. Abraham's faith was obviously less than ideal—rather like ours, in fact. And it was this kind of faith, according to Genesis, that God "credited . . . to him as righteousness." One thing's for certain: if a person could be justified only by observing the law, Abraham would never have made it.

Could Paul perhaps have found a better or more encouraging example than Abraham to illustrate his point that a person is "justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rom. 3:28, RSV)? We don't think so.

## REACT

Could Paul have chosen any other biblical characters to illustrate his argument in Romans 4? If so, how would they prove his point?

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<sup>4</sup> Walter G. Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 144.

Thursday, October 18

# Healing Faith

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## HOW-TO

**Key Texts:** Rom. 3:3, 4; Mark 5:21-34

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She had hoarded the pain close to her heart. Her fear of rejection was hidden from public scrutiny. Yet a private paradox warred inside her—a desire for healing and an overriding sense of her insignificance. *If only I could touch Him once . . .*

A wave of self-doubt washed over her. *What if I should reach out and discover only my empty hand?* The pushing and jostling crowd made her feel a valueless and deserted object, but she realized that she was in the vicinity of the only remedy available to her. Would she be so foolish as to let fear isolate her from the ultimate source of strength? In desperate need her hand tentatively reached toward her last chance of healing.

The sick woman touching the hem of Jesus' garment is more than a story. It transcends all time and becomes a symbol of our own struggle and search for faith and wholeness. Like the woman, we can easily become captives of reticence and inertia. Christ may be within our grasp, yet somehow the concept of belief is hard to translate into an act of personal faith. Perhaps feelings of unworthiness prevent us from reaching out to God, and we become obsessed with possible failure rather than potential success.

Often our expectations of faith betray us so that real faith is impossible. Or maybe the crowd of people and things pressing in on us obscures our view of Christ.

When Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" He wanted to show that even in a crowd He pays specific attention to an individual in need. By reaching out, with even a minute amount of faith, we are revealing to God that we are tired of inferior substitutes and no longer have the capacity to continue life alone. An act of faith is a conscious attempt to reach God and let Him restore our potential.

Thank God, the woman did not wait for a miraculous sign to inspire her to move beyond her pain and be secured in God's love. She may have thought it "safe" to remain part of the crowd, yet she risked her doubt and discovered the reality of a changed life.

We may never physically touch Christ's garment, but when we abandon our self-dependency He reaches us with the words: "Your faith has made you well. Go in peace" (Mark 5:34, NKJV).

## REACT

1. Is everything possible to one who believes (see Mark 9:23)? How do I reconcile these words with my personal failures?

2. Do I sometimes fail to recognize my experience of God because I am waiting for the kind of Christian experience that others *seem* to be having? Why or why not?

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by Robyn Priestley and Carolyn Rickett

Robyn Priestley is a lecturer in history, and Carolyn Rickett is an English major in her final year at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

# Adventists Have a Mortgage on Salvation

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## OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 3:27-29

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"Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith. . . . Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also" (Rom. 3:27-29, RSV).

His approach was not subtle: "You Adventists think you've got a mortgage on salvation!"

"You're right. We've been greatly blessed."

"It's typical of all sects," Geoff continued hurtfully. "They all end up with the 'join us or you are damned' line. You are no different. Just a sect, trying to boost your numbers and your offerings."

"Now just wait a minute. You've also got a mortgage on salvation! Does that make your church a sect?"

"Huh! How do you mean?" came the puzzled but less cocky reply.

"When Christ died, He died for all. Any person who claims by faith His death for his own has a mortgage or title deed to salvation. You believe in Jesus; therefore, you have the mortgage."

"Hang on. I know that, because of Jesus, salvation is mine. But does your church accept that I can be saved without being a Seventh-day Adventist? More to

the point, can I be saved as a Catholic?" Geoff was still unconvinced.

"Sure! Look at what Paul says in Romans 3:29. God is the God of all. And thanks for promoting us to a church!"

Geoff attacked again. "The church bit was an accident. But you have really stepped on dangerous ground by bringing Romans into the discussion. Your teachings on the Sabbath leave you wide open to the sect accusation. In verse 28 [RSV] Paul actually says, 'A man is justified by faith apart from works of law.' That sinks your Sabbath argument! If you Adventists say I have to keep the Sabbath to be saved, then you deserve the label of sect!"

While this discussion may appear contrived, it poses a number of important questions. Think them through for yourself in the light of Romans 3.

## REACT

1. Is salvation open to people of all faiths?
2. Can a person be saved if he does not follow all the teachings of Christ? Why or why not?
3. What role do distinctive doctrines such as the Sabbath play in our salvation?
4. What are the advantages of being a Seventh-day Adventist?
5. How does being an Adventist make salvation more or less difficult?

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by Norman R. Carlsen

Norman R. Carlsen is a senior lecturer in mathematics and computer science at Avondale College, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

# Assurance of Salvation



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“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1, 2, NIV).

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Sunday, October 21

# A Second Chance?

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## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 5

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Imagine stepping into a time machine. Wind back the clock to the time of Adam. The picture is different indeed from the hectic, cluttered world of the twentieth century. Yet the same element of human frustration prevails, and the reality of destruction and death is present.

Now, put yourself in Adam's shoes. Of course, he doesn't have any, but just imagine how you would feel, knowing that your disobedience has marred the whole of creation and put the future of the world in jeopardy. Not only that, but the entire universe has watched you botch up a perfect and beautiful creation. What humiliation! And then there's the guilt. You are responsible for the lives of all future generations, for "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

Hang on a minute. God isn't being fair, is He? After all, it seems only a minor mistake, a small bite of the forbidden fruit, yet the punishment is death! Surely you deserve a second chance.

But is it any different in 1990? Do you always get a second chance? Professors and teachers

rarely feel sympathetic enough to give you another attempt at an important exam. The consequence of failing to study is a poor grade.

And you may never get another opportunity to say yes to a great guy or gorgeous girl who asks you out. No, a wrong decision is often impossible to change. When you go for a crucial shot in a basketball match and the ball fails to drop through the basket, the moment is gone. There can be no replay.

All the dreams and wishes in the world do not allow us to relive the past or to remedy mistakes. Second chances are simply not allowed.

This week's lesson points out one major exception to this rule of life. It's true! God has given you and Adam and all the rest of humanity another chance. What a relief for Adam to know that God has provided the planet with a way out of the sin problem! Whether or not we deserve it is certainly questionable. We are all imperfect—we all fail, break God's law, and find ourselves to be inadequate. However, Christ's life and death give us a new assurance. Since they entitle us to the gift of salvation, offering hope for the future, we no longer view life as a struggle culminating in the inevitable fate of death. Christ is our second chance!

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by Sharelle Coombe

Sharelle Coombe is in her final year at Sydney Adventist High School, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

# Ruin and Rescue Through the Lives of Two Men

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## LOGOS

Rom. 5

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### The Center of the Gospel (read Rom. 5:1, 2)

Calvary shows us how far people will go in sin and at the same time how far God will go in saving them. Jesus is central to the gospel. Without His death there is no meaning in life or, for that matter, no life! We are often tempted to think that there is something of worth in our faith. But Paul in Romans 5 tells us that faith is simply the empty hand that accepts.

In verses 1 and 2 Paul uses a number of key words that go to the heart of our understanding of Christianity: *justified, faith, peace, access, stand[ing], rejoice, hope, and glory*. Jesus Christ fills these words with the meaning that makes them so important to Christians. *Justification* carries with it the legal concept of innocence. We are seen from God's perspective as if we had never sinned.

*Give your definition of the following words: justification, faith, access, standing, and glory.*

### Suffering That Leads to Hope (read Rom. 5:3-5)

Jesus gives meaning to the "here and now," not just the "there and then." Through His Spirit He helps us make sense out of much that would otherwise be

purposeless. He gives us hope in suffering. Rejoicing comes easiest when we are able to look back on the trauma and see Christ giving us perseverance, building our character, and infusing us with hope. A little lady in my church was in constant pain from crippling arthritis. Wearing a full body and neck brace, she moved at an agonizing snail's pace to care for the myriad needs of a totally insensitive husband. I found myself often becoming angry with her cruel mate, but I was always inspired by her simple comment, "God is so good to me." I saw in this simple life a reproduction of the character of Jesus.

### Enemies to Friends (read Rom. 5:6-11)

Paul clearly shows the sacrifice of Christ to be far beyond the giving of just another good man. He depicts Him as dying for His enemies because He wanted them to be friends. God wasn't just a spectator in this event, He was an integral part of it! God was "in Christ . . . reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19, RSV). Christ's death places all of us in a new relationship with God: we are now friends.

"Through Jesus our *status* with God was changed. Sinners though we were, we were put into a right relationship with God. *But that is not enough*. Not only our *status* must be changed but our *state*.

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by Barry Gane

Barry Gane is youth director for the South Pacific Division.

The saved sinner cannot go on being a sinner; he must become good. Christ's death changed our *status*; his risen life changes our *state*. He is not dead but alive; he is with us always to help us and guide us, to fill us with his strength so as to overcome temptation, to clothe our lives with something of his radiance."

### **Death Through Someone Else's Blunder (read Rom. 5:12-14)**

From a sinner's perspective it's easy to view God as the enemy. We have this view of God because of the conscious action of our forefather and representative, Adam. He chose to walk out of step with God; he chose another path, which led to sin and death. And ever since, we have laid the blame for our agony at God's feet.

Paul contrasts the fall of Adam and the justifying work of Christ. Adam gave us a heritage of death. Christ, the second Adam, gives life (cf. 1 Cor. 15:22, 45).

Sin and death have a common genesis. They grew and flourished side by side, affecting and afflicting all humanity.

*When Paul talks of Christ as the second Adam, does he give us any insight into the human nature of Christ? Is it important for us to grapple with this issue? Why?*

### **The Gift (read Rom. 5:15-17)**

Christ's death is the opening of the door to life for all people. Paul calls this life a gift. He uses the

word *gift* five times to make sure the reader gets the point. In a real way Jesus canceled Adam's curse, and God's gift of life became available to all human beings. We can accept that gift and have eternal life, or we can choose to defend our sin-filled lives and reap the reward—the second, or eternal, death.

### **The Heart of the Matter (read Rom. 5:18, 19)**

As Paul looks to the cross he sees it as the central statement of God to humanity. "The result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men" (verse 18, NIV). The consequences of Adam's disobedience are documented adequately in any cemetery. And we should be the living documentary of the change that Jesus' obedience has wrought.

### **More Than Enough (read Rom. 5:20, 21)**

No matter how hideous or foul the sin, God extends His grace to cover it. Our connection with Adam is through our genes. We have no choice in the matter. But our connection with Christ is voluntary. He forces no one; He only pleads that we accept His gift.

*You may be plagued with all sorts of questions about the "fairness" of being related to Adam, but what comment is God making through Jesus?*

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\*William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), pp. 76, 77.

# The Two Adams

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## TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 15:22

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"Not because we first loved Him did Christ love us; but 'while we were yet sinners,' He died for us. He does not treat us according to our desert. Although our sins have merited condemnation, He does not condemn us. Year after year He has borne with our weakness and ignorance, with our ingratitude and waywardness. Notwithstanding our wanderings, our hardness of heart, our neglect of His Holy Word, His hand is stretched out still.

"Grace is an attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings. We did not seek for it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow His grace upon us, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our only claim to His mercy is our great need."<sup>1</sup>

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Romans 6:23. . . . Deuteronomy 30:15. The death referred to in these scriptures is not that pronounced upon Adam, for all mankind suffer the penalty of his transgression. It is the 'second death' that is placed in contrast with everlasting life.

"In consequence of Adam's sin, death passed upon the whole human race. All alike go down into the grave. And through the provisions of the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth

from their graves. "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust"; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:22. But a distinction is made between the two classes that are brought forth. 'All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.' John 5:28, 29. They who have been 'accounted worthy' of the resurrection of life are 'blessed and holy.' 'On such the second death hath no power.' Revelation 20:6. But those who have not, through repentance and faith, secured pardon must receive the penalty of transgression—the wages of sin."<sup>2</sup>

"As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death. But Christ steps in and passes over the ground where Adam fell, enduring every test in man's behalf. He redeems Adam's disgraceful failure and fall by coming forth from the trial untarnished. This places man on vantage ground with God. It places him where, through accepting Christ as his Saviour, he becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Thus he becomes connected with God and Christ."<sup>3</sup>

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1. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 181.

2. *The Great Controversy*, p. 544.

3. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, p. 1074.

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by Barry Gane

Barry Gane is youth director for the South Pacific Division.

Wednesday, October 24

# What Functions Does Law Have in Our Society?

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## EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rom. 5:20

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"The law was added so that the trespass might increase" (Rom. 5:20, NIV).

Paul's words in the above text contradict our notion of the function of law. The Australian Constitution Act 1903 (Cth) says, "The Parliament shall . . . have the power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth" (s. 51). "Peace, order and good government" are fundamentally opposite to trespass (meaning sins or offenses). If our laws increased trespass, then people would not only challenge them in the courts but also express their dissatisfaction at the polls.

The Christians in Rome would have been equally surprised by Paul's words to them. Roman law was a sophisticated system certainly designed to regulate society and reduce trespass. In fact, it was the foundation of much of the law in Europe today. Similarly, Paul's notion would have annoyed the Pharisees, who devoted their whole life to perfecting themselves by observance of the law. How could the law, their key to salvation, serve to increase trespass? It was unthinkable!

But this is what Paul said. So how can we explain this anomaly? One explanation is that the law

provided a focus for sin. Although sin existed before God gave the law on Sinai, an offense was not a specific trespass of a code. But after God gave the law in a formal statement, each sin became a specific and individual trespass (see verse 13). People seem naturally to become curious about prohibitions and to rebel against them. Thus, God's codified law excites opposition in the rebellious human heart, thereby increasing the trespass, or multiplying transgression. However, this explanation alone is inadequate.

Another explanation\* is that by noting the relationship of the law to sin, or trespass, Paul was able to demonstrate its position relative to grace. In fact, the second half of Romans 5:20 superimposes grace on law and sin. "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (verse 20, NIV). Law, introduced to highlight the need for grace, increases our awareness of sin. Only grace can defeat sin once and for all. And that would have riled the Pharisees.

## REACT

If grace is of paramount importance, then what is the function of the law?

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\*David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, eds., *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), vol. 38, *Romans 1-8*, by James D. G. Dunn, pp. 285-287.

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by Andrew Cox

Andrew Cox is a second-year law student at the University of Sydney, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Thursday, October 25

# Fear Versus Assurance

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## HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 5:3

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It has been said that we cannot love someone without the fear of losing him. Our fear may prompt the attitude that we had better not love someone deeply or place much value on him lest he reject our love and we lose him. This fear may be unconscious, originating in basic insecurity or mistrust; or it may stem from a consciously perceived threat in our environment.

We may be afraid that to love someone is an open invitation for hurt and suffering. Perhaps contributing to this impression are the numerous stories we hear of personal tragedies that occur for no discernible reason.

One of the hardest things to understand about suffering is not its occurrence (for we have grown to expect it as a result of sin) but its apparently unfair distribution.

When severe hardships fall on people who have devoted their entire lives to God, when someone's trusted partner deserts him after many years, or when good people die young, our minds cannot conceive of any resultant good.

In Romans 5 Paul dares to suggest that it is possible to rejoice in our sufferings. In verses 1-5 he states that through them we may increase our endurance, perfect our character, and strengthen our faith and Christian hope, based

on the assurance of God's unchanging love for us.

### Immunity From Suffering

We have a limited capacity to handle suffering. In the devastation following loss, death, or disillusionment comes a great temptation to question God. We may focus more on asking God why bad things happen than on seeking His help in coping with the present and future.

We cannot expect immunity from suffering just because we may be "good people" or "faithful Christians." We are even warned that loyalty to God may make us prime targets of Satan's schemes. Satan knows that when we suffer we are weak, hurt, and doubtful—and therefore vulnerable to the temptation to become bitter and mistrustful of God.

### Bitterness or Rejoicing

Perhaps our most natural reactions to hurting and suffering are initial anger and bitterness. Whether or not we let that bitterness fuel lasting resentment toward God and cause us to question His love and doubt His existence is our decision.

Romans 5:3-5 puts forward an alternative. Here Paul suggests that the ultimate outcome of suffering need not be lasting pain or grief. If we persevere through trials, we can emerge with a stronger character and a new sense of worth, based on renewed assurances of God's love.

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by Denise Murray

Denise Murray is a newly graduated registered nurse working at Sydney Adventist Hospital, Wahroonga, N.S.W., Australia.

# The Pleasure of Pain

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## OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 5:3, 4

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The fifth chapter of Romans is the grand conclusion of Paul's "good news in a nutshell." The good news is that we are freed from the guilt and condemnation of sin and don't have to rely on our own merit to be saved. This great release causes Paul to express his elevated sentiments with enthusiasm. Thus he exclaims, "Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life to all men" (verse 18, NIV).

Paul's exuberance is almost contagious. But then, among the rapturous sentiments, he adds, "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings" (verses 2, 3, NIV).

Personally, I find myself repelled by the idea of rejoicing in suffering. Suffering is one of those things I never feel enthusiastic about. In my experience, suffering leads only to despair. Consider a

rat classically conditioned by electric shock. As long as the shocks correlate with some meaning (such as a shock-free plate to leap upon), the rat is content. However, if the rat receives random shocks, it suffers a nervous breakdown.

C. S. Lewis\* sees suffering as useful in the Christian journey. We try as hard as we can to be good people. We may be able to succeed when things go smoothly, but when unexpected crises come we realize our failure and eventually we despair. Indeed, not until we have utterly abandoned the hope of being good people do we turn to Christ and rely on Him. Thus we can rejoice in suffering because it forces us through despair in our own efforts to come to rely entirely on Christ.

## REACT

Is it fair that we all be counted sinners because of Adam's sin? Wouldn't judgment on an individual basis be more fair? Why or why not?

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\*C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Fontana, 1962).

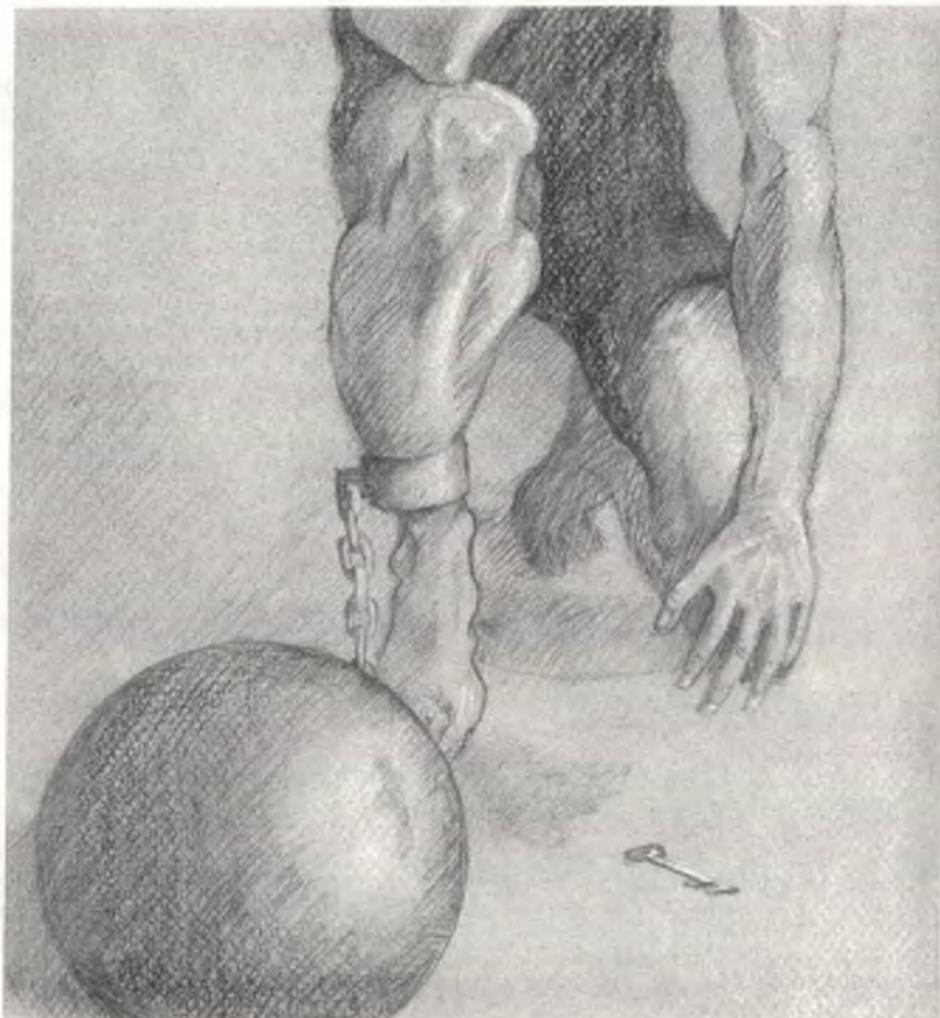
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by Richard Ferch

Richard Ferch is studying medicine at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Lesson 5, October 28—November 3

# Living Free From Sin



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“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:12-14, NIV).

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Sunday, October 28

## “Here Comes ‘Da Kine’!”

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### INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 6

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I lived in Honolulu, Hawaii, for the past four years. If I learned anything “useful” while there, besides how to be an effective beach bum, it was how to listen to variations on the English language. They called it pidgin English.

My friends at Waikiki Beach were forever talking about the “whachacall.” I thought it was a type of bird indigenous to Hawaii. It turns out it was the word they used when all others failed them. You know, the “wha-cha-ma-call-it.”

But the best phrase in Hawaii, and the most used, is “da kine.” It is a catchall term for referring specifically to anything in general. When you say you want to go visit Bellows Beach, you say, “Eh, Brah, you like go da kine?” It says it all!

Which reminds me of Romans

6. Some have accused Paul of writing ambiguously on occasion. They say, “Even Peter recognized the problem [see 2 Peter 3:16], so how can I understand Romans 6?” Actually it can be done. The key lies in looking at Romans 6 as a lawyer would.

“What!” you say. “Desecrate the Holy Word with human terms?” Note verse 19. This chapter is written in human terms in order to make important spiritual lessons strike home!

So, what is the point of Romans 6? Simply that in the eyes of the law we all are worthy of condemnation by the Judge. But in the eyes of grace we are free to choose a different kind of slavery. Instead of trembling before the Judge without any defense, we face the Judge with the Judge as our defense lawyer! Instead of an indefinite fear for our future, we have a definite hope in a Saviour!

Instead of “Here comes ‘da kine,’” we hear the words “Here comes my Judge—my Saviour.”

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by Charles Llu

Charles Llu is a chaplain at Loma Linda University, as well as associate pastor for campus ministry at Campus Hill SDA Church, Loma Linda, California.

# How to Be Free From Sin

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## LOGOS

### Rom. 6

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The sixth chapter of Romans grows logically out of something Paul says at the end of chapter 5: "Where sin increased, grace increased all the more" (verse 20, NIV). Paul knew that people reading these words were likely to say, "If grace increases to cover increasing sin, then why not continue in sin and just rely on God's grace to take care of it? Why should we even worry about sinning?" So, at the beginning of chapter 6 Paul asks the question for them. And he answers it: "By no means!" But why not? And how can the Christian escape from the dominion of sin, the result of Adam's sin, under which he was born?

Paul's answer is startling: the Christian isn't the key factor in dealing with sin at all, because he's dead to sin. "We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (verse 2, NIV). Paul says that when Christ died on the cross, he too died. "We died with Christ" (verse 8, NIV).

But how does that affect me? How does that affect the way I live? How do I experience the setting free from sin? Paul promises, "Sin shall not be your master" (verse 14, NIV), but how does that promise become reality? When I struggle with sin day after day and so often lose the struggle, how can I believe that Paul meant real freedom from the

dominion of sin?

Romans 6 lays out a path of progress for the Christian in his or her dealings with sin. Three key words mark this path: *know* in verse 6; *reckon, count* (NIV), or *consider* (RSV) in verse 11; and *offer* (NIV) or *present* (NASB) in verse 13. These are the three steps to freedom from the dominion of sin.

#### **Know (read Rom. 6:6)**

First, we must know something. We must know that when Christ died on the cross He didn't die alone; potentially we died with Him. How did this work? First, God put us in Christ (see 1 Cor. 1:30). Then Romans 6 says that God dealt with us in Christ. He crucified us in Christ; He buried us in Christ; He resurrected us in Christ. Now we are seated in heavenly places in Christ (see Eph. 2:6). Our freedom from the power of sin begins when we know these things.

Paul says, "We died to sin" with Christ. Some think that we die to sin when we are baptized. Not true. Instead, when we know that we died in Christ at the cross, we are converted and publicly witness to that by baptism. After all, what else can we do with a corpse but bury it? When we know that we are dead, we submit to burial (baptism).

#### **Reckon (read Rom. 6:11)**

This is the same word used of God's reckoning Abraham's faith to him as righteousness (see 4:9)

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by David VanDenburgh

David VanDenburgh is senior pastor at Campus Hill SDA Church, Loma Linda, California.

and of Jesus being reckoned a transgressor (see Luke 22:37). It means that we behave as though something is true. This is what God does when He treats us as though we are righteous when we trust in Jesus. It's also what God did when He treated Jesus the way we deserve to be treated, so that we might be treated the way He deserves to be treated. We are to reckon or consider something as true. This requires faith that something is true because God says it is true, even though we may not see it. This is the second step in the path of progress.

### **Present (read Rom. 6:13)**

Realizing that we died to sin when Christ died, and reckoning that as true for ourselves in spite of Satan's assertions to the contrary, we now deliberately give our bodies to God for His use. It's like the soldier presenting himself to his commander for duty. We present ourselves to God to obey His commands. Before we understood these things, we presented ourselves to sin to do its bidding, but now we deny sin the use of our bodies and give it to God. Each day, each time we think of it, we consciously present God with the use of our bodies (minds, abilities, time, and physical members) to do His will. This is the third step in the path of progress.

To recapitulate: (1) we know

that we have died to sin with Christ on the cross (see verse 6); (2) we reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (see verse 11); and (3) we present ourselves to God for service.

When Satan tempts us to sin, we say, "Sorry, but I died to that; I can't do that." Every morning when we get up we say, "I'm dead to the sinful lifestyle and alive to a new lifestyle with Jesus at the center." Of course, the devil comes to tell us that we aren't dead, but rather very much alive, to sin. That's when we must reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God and prove it by presenting ourselves to God for service.

Notice that though Paul promises that sin will not "reign over us" as we follow this three-step path, sin does remain, and we must be on guard against it all our life. The dominion of sin over us is broken and remains broken as long as we know, reckon, and present ourselves to God for His use. While we do this, we are free, not to sin, but to offer ourselves to God as obedient slaves. "For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! . . . You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness" (verses 14-18, NIV).

# Christian Potential

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## TESTIMONY

Key Text: 2 Peter 1:5-7

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At our baptism we may unite with the three greatest Powers in the universe. Only through our connection with Them are we able to live a life of the highest Christian potential, a goal we cannot aspire to in our own strength.

"In baptism we are given to the Lord as a vessel to be used. Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Self is by profession dead to a life of sin. The waters cover the candidate, and in the presence of the whole heavenly universe the mutual pledge is made. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, man is laid in his watery grave, buried with Christ in baptism, and raised from the water to live the new life of loyalty to God. The three great powers in heaven are witnesses; they are invisible but present."<sup>1</sup>

"Every opportunity, every advantage, every privilege, has been given to us to gain a rich Christian experience; but we do not learn everything all at once. There must be a growth. Many, having learned a little in school, think they are ready to graduate. They think they know about all that is worth knowing. We are not to think that as soon as we are baptized we are ready to graduate from the school of Christ. When we have accepted Christ, and in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of

the Holy Spirit have pledged ourselves to serve God, the Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit—the three dignitaries and powers of heaven—pledge themselves that every faculty shall be given to us if we carry out our baptismal vows to 'come out from among them, and be . . . separate, . . . and touch not the unclean thing.' When we are true to our vows, He says, 'I will receive you.'<sup>2</sup>

"The new birth is a rare experience in this age of the world. This is the reason why there are so many perplexities in the churches. Many, so many, who assume the name of Christ are unsanctified and unholy. They have been baptized, but they were buried alive. Self did not die, and therefore they did not rise to newness of life in Christ."<sup>3</sup>

"At our baptism we pledged ourselves to break all connection with Satan and his agencies, and to put heart and mind and soul into the work of extending the kingdom of God. All heaven is working for this object. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are pledged to cooperate with sanctified human instrumentalities. If we are true to our vow, there is opened to us a door of communication with heaven—a door that no human hand or satanic agency can close."<sup>4</sup>

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1. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, p. 1074.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 1075.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

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by George Veal, Jr.

George Veal, Jr., is a health educator and counselor of juvenile delinquents in Loma Linda, California.

Wednesday, October 31

# A New Immune System

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## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Rom. 6:8-11**

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"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works" (Ps. 139:14, NKJV). It is difficult for one who has spent time studying the intricacies of the human body to disagree with the fact that we are truly "fearfully and wonderfully made." It is amazing how God has integrated so many functions and complex systems into such a small form.

In our organized attempts to understand the human body, we have divided it into various systems. While some of these systems—for example, the circulatory, skeletal, and digestive systems—are well known to most of us, others such as the immune system, are not so familiar. This system is responsible for protecting us against disease. Without it, as is true of any other physiological system, life would be impossible. The devastating impact of the AIDS virus (HIV) on the immune system is a well-known example of this.

But an immune deficiency is not limited to the people we hear about in the medical news. In a sense, we all have damaged immune systems. Not physically speaking, but spiritually. Like the patient with a damaged physical immune system and no resistance against disease, we have a damaged spiritual immune system

and lack power to resist temptation. The result is that we find ourselves overcome with the disease of sin.

What we need is a cure for this spiritual deficiency. We need a new spiritual immune system. The good news is that God offers us the cure as a gift! Just as a physical immune system is given to us at birth, a spiritual immune system is *given* to us when we are born again.

In his second epistle, Peter tells us that God's "divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" and that He has "given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (1:3, 4, NKJV). God wants to give us everything we need. He wants us to be partakers of the divine nature.

In this week's lesson, Romans 6 tells us that those who are buried with Christ through baptism into death will walk in newness of life. "For he who has died has been freed from sin. . . . Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. . . . For sin shall not have dominion over you" (verses 7-14, NKJV). The answer to the sin problem—our spiritual immune deficiency—is death with Christ and living again in Him.

Paul goes on in verse 18 to describe what it's like to live free

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by Andrew Kuninobu

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from sin. "And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (NKJV). What an interesting and beautiful truth! A slave of righteousness! This means that just as it is easy to sin when we're slaves of sin, it must be easy not to sin when we're slaves of righteousness. And it is! Christ says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:29, 30, NKJV).

When we are dead to self and alive to Christ—yoked with Him—He gives us the power we need. Nothing we face will be too difficult, for God will always provide the strength to overcome temptation (see 1 Cor. 10:13). We must believe the words "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13, NKJV).

Thank God that He has provided everything we need to be healed of our spiritual immune deficiency!

Thursday, November 1

# Grace: Putting It to Work

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## HOW-TO

Key Text: Phil. 1:6

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According to Paul's letter to the Romans, we are not under law but under grace. Just what is grace? The dictionary defines it as follows: (1) help given man by God (as in overcoming temptation); (2) freedom from sin through divine grace; and (3) a virtue coming from God.

Although Webster gives several definitions, grace can still seem like a foggy, ethereal concept swirling around somewhere out there. Those of us born with highly application-focused minds tend to search for ways to make such a concept more concrete.

Reading into the dictionary definition, I deduced that grace is part of a relationship between God and us. Because of His love for us, we choose to live as He has suggested. Not only does He forgive us for the times we pull away from His love and strike out on our own, but also He gives us the grace to return and overcome our independent, headstrong, and rebellious ways.

So, just how do we get a good grip on that grace and make it work in our relationship with God? Romans 6:12-14 sets out clearly what we should do:

1. *Give God the rulership of our life.* We should submit ourselves entirely to Him daily and

do it more than just in the morning if we have to. For those times when we may not feel like giving Him emotional rulership we have to say, "Lord, I don't feel like giving it all up to You today. You're going to have to make me willing, so go ahead and do Your work."

2. *Say no to sin.* Four little words, and they're so *hard* to put into practice! Hard, that is, until we go through step 1. If we find ourselves wanting to do \_\_\_\_\_ (supply the name of a pet sin), we should go back to step 1. Somehow when we discuss the problem with God, telling Him all about this desire contrary to His wishes for us, it becomes a lot easier to say no and happily go on to other things.

3. *Confess our sins and accept His forgiveness when we fail.* We need not mentally flagellate ourselves for our failure to live God's way. He loves us; He took infinite care and pleasure in forming us, knowing us, and even numbering the hairs of our head. Won't He also take infinite pleasure in welcoming us back with open arms?

4. *Start again, and never give up.* The devil pounces on us with discouragement, with mental pictures of repeated failure. We may see others around us, some who call themselves Christian, who have given up on the good fight. Those close to us may not under-

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by Ginger Ketting

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stand our longing to live a life bound up with God. But our God loves, and gives more chances than there are grains of sand on the beach.

David longed for God as a deer longs for water. Moses struggled through a life in which grumbling

and anger got the best of him at times. Enoch walked with God amid the growing wickedness around him. Certainly we can fight the "good fight of faith" too, for He who began a good work in us has promised to complete it (see Phil. 1:6).

Friday, November 2, 1990

## “Terms of Humanity”

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### OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 6

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If you've ever wondered about the divinity gap, you're not alone. People for ages have wondered about the same thing. This issue seems to bring eternal frustration. Maybe it just has something to do with eternal things.

Suppose that someone comes along and tells us to get our act together. We figure that he is probably right, that we need to become good. So we take a look in the Bible and read about being perfect like God. Why not? We'll give it a go.

How long does it take us to figure out the relative impossibility (make that sheer impossibility) of such a task? But still we figure God's Word must instruct us how to do this right. So it is that many of us discover Romans 6. And this mirror image of ourselves has given many of us a real feel for the divinity gap. We find that a perfect God telling us imperfect mortals how to be perfect feels (in lay terms) a lot like an astrophysicist telling us how easy it is to figure the exact chemical composition of Neptune's newly discovered moon.

How do we do it? And how can God understand our situation, much less tell us how to improve it from way up there? He doesn't! He tells us from here. The good news is that Jesus came and lived here to understand us from our perspective. The better news is that He died for us to give us His perspective. And the best news is that His Holy Spirit is communicating horizontally, not vertically, with us right now.

Romans 6 tells us that the entire message of overcoming sin in our lives is a spiritual message (i.e., a heavenly one). But for those of us not yet in heaven, we need it couched in earthly terms. I fear that many of us have decided the gap between heaven and earth is too great for us even to attempt to bridge. Again, Romans 6 must serve as our bridge. We must hear God say to us, "You used to draw your pay from the devil; now you must change jobs and begin to see My cashier" (or some such equivalent to slavery in twentieth-century terms).

"Before I go I'll send you the Comforter." His part is to give us all we need before we ask. Our part is to ask. He's done His part. Have we done ours?

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by Charles Liu

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# Works and Grace

IT WAS THEN ANTONIO REALISED  
THAT TO BE AN ACE HE NEEDED  
ONE MORE THING TO ADD TO HIS  
KEENNESS AND FLYING SKILL  
- FAITH, SOMETHING HE  
NOW DISCOVERED HE LACKED.



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“Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin” (Rom. 7:24, 25, RSV).

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Sunday, November 4

# Reynaldo and Runette

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## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 7

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Mr. Reynaldo S. Hesperia sat quietly in his living room, pondering the fate of the world. Across the room sat Runette, his wife. Together they pondered the fate of the world.

"I say, Runette, what's the latest in evening news?" wondered Reynaldo. "I heard on news-talk radio that the president is considering new trade sanctions on South Africa."

"I don't know about South Africa, but I do hear about trouble in the west end of our town," Runette replied. "In fact, I understand that some of the local gangs have even been sighted just a couple of blocks away from our street. Doesn't that just give you the creeps? Right here in our neighborhood! We're not even safe in our own home."

"Now, now, Runette," said Reynaldo, "we can't assume that we are in danger just because you hear a rumor of trouble. And besides, how do we really know these kids are all that bad? You know how the media hypes everything."

"That's all very fine theoretical talk when you drive out to an insulated business park every day to work while I live my days within spitting distance of muggings, rapes, and killings. In fact, I wonder that when you come home each night from work you don't see the graffiti, and the kids

hanging out just down the block!"

"Of course I see that, Runette," said Reynaldo, "but I also see the look in those kids' eyes. You know, that look of deep sorrow that our pastor spoke of last Sabbath. That's no hardened look of evil in those kids; it's a lost look!"

Runette stood up and paced the floor as she usually did when she became passionate about something. "Then do I hear you saying, my dear, that hope springs eternal for Los Angeles gang kids?"

"Of course," replied Reynaldo. "But it springs from a specific source. Reality tells us that most gang kids do not change or become happy, responsible citizens naturally. But reality also tells us they can. And they sometimes do, just as we can!"

"And how do they—and we—experience this change? What is this specific source of a better life?" asked Runette, stopped in midpace for the moment.

"Why, I'm surprised at you, Runette!" said Reynaldo. "You're the one who gave me the answer! Don't you know? It was you, after all, who first pointed me to Romans 7."

"Ah, yes!" mused Runette. "Now that you mention it, I do recall some meaningful advice on change in that chapter."

Mr. Reynaldo S. Hesperia sat quietly in his living room, pondering the fate of the world. Across the room sat Runette, his wife. Together they pondered the fate of *their* world.

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by Charles Llu

Charles Llu is a chaplain at Loma Linda University, as well as associate pastor for campus ministry at Campus Hill SDA Church, Loma Linda, California.

# The Christian and the Law

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## LOGOS

### Rom. 7

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As champions of the neglected fourth commandment, Seventh-day Adventists have specialized in expounding the function of God's law. Indeed, the proclamation of the law-gospel relationship is Seventh-day Adventism's *raison d'être*, or purpose of existence! Romans 7 is the locus classicus of Paul's understanding of the law. No chapter, especially verses 14-25, has been more debated within Christendom and Adventism than this one.

#### No Longer Under the Law (read Rom. 7:1-6)

*"Likewise, my brethren, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God" (verse 4, RSV).*

"Assuming that the Roman believers, both Jew and Greek, were familiar with the law . . . Paul reminds them that the law has jurisdiction over a man only during his lifetime. For instance, in the marriage contract a wife is required to be faithful to her husband all his life. If she fails in this regard, she is called an adulteress, but as soon as her husband dies, she is free to remarry without there being any suggestion of impropriety. She is *'released from the law of her husband.'*

"Paul's application of the illustration is not altogether straightforward, but his obvious point is that, in the same way a widow is no longer under any legal obligation to her late husband, so the believer who was formerly married to the law is under no obligation to the law as a means of justification once the law dies. The problem with Paul's illustration is that the picture does not fit, because in real life the law does not die but the believer dies to the law. His point is clear nevertheless."

#### Why, Then, the Law? (read Rom. 7:7-13)

*"Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure" (verse 13, RSV).*

Some say, "If we are no longer under the law, then let's throw out the law completely." Anticipating this objection, Paul explains the proper function of the law.

The law reveals sin (see verses 7, 13; cf. 3:19, 20; 4:5; and 5:13, 20). Paul once had a shallow, superficial view of the law, thinking that he was well able to keep it (see Phil. 3:4-9). When sin is only an act of the will, then, yes, we can keep the law.

Paul speaks four times in this section of the law's bringing him to death (see Rom. 7:9, 10, 11, 13). But how can something "holy,

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Larry Christoffel

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just and good" like the commandment of God do such a bad thing as to condemn him to death? The law is God's means of revealing our desperate, sinful condition, which only the Saviour can rectify.

### **The Christian Warfare (read Rom. 7:14, 15)**

*"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin" (verse 25, RSV).*

In Romans 7:14, 15 Paul is describing the condition of a Christian. The law cannot save us, either before or after we have received Christ!

1. Romans 7 is part of the section of Romans that considers the Christian's relation to four enemies of God's people: wrath (chapter 5); sin (chapter 6); condemnation by the law (chapter 7); and death (chapter 8). Chapters 1 through 4 emphasize the law as it pertains to the nonbeliever. One would expect something beyond that in chapter 7.

2. Paul speaks in the present tense in verses 14-25, using the personal pronouns *I*, *me*, and *my*. The natural sense is that he is speaking of his present personal condition.

3. Paul distinguishes between himself (the Christian) and sin that is operating through his body, or flesh. With his mind he delights in and obeys God's law. The nonbeliever knows of no such conflict, since his mind as well as his flesh rebels against God's law (see 8:5-8).

4. "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law" (Gal. 5:17, 18, RSV). Unquestionably these verses refer to Christians with

the Holy Spirit, and the message is identical to that in Romans 7:14-25.

5. The person of Romans 7:25 gives God thanks "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Not only does he recognize Jesus Christ as personal Lord, which only a Christian can do (see 1 Cor. 12:3), but he also recognizes his readers as fellow Christians, undergoing a similar experience.

6. We must consider Romans 8:1-4 to be a concluding part of the previous section, since it is linked through the word *therefore*. In spite of the struggle between the mind and the flesh (see 7:14-25), Paul offers this encouragement: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1, RSV). Paul has been set free from the law of sin and death (see verse 2), not in the sense that he has reached ethical perfection, but in the sense that the power of sin is broken!

Verse 3 explains the meaning of the whole conflict: Since we human beings working without Christ could not perfectly keep the law, weakened by the flesh, God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be our substitute and example (see 2 Cor. 5:21). And the result is that, although we do not keep the law in order to be saved, "the just requirements of the law" are "fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4, RSV).

Romans 8, the subject for next week, must be studied in connection with Romans 7 to understand Paul's perspective of the Christian life.

*Whom do you think the person of Romans 7:14-25 represents? Why?*

\*D. Stuart Briscoe, *Romans, The Communicator's Commentary Series*, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie, vol. 6 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, Publisher, 1982), p. 142.

# Is It Easier to Follow Self or Christ?

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## TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 7:24, 25

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In a growing Christian experience there are constant struggles between self and Christ. But who has the upper hand in this battle? And why is the idea of Christian perfection even important? Because "when the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."<sup>1</sup>

The struggle in a Christian life between self (principle of Satan) and love (principle of God) is of great importance to each of us. But which of these forces is more powerful?

There are three options: (1) self is more powerful than love; (2) self and love are equal in strength (there is a 50-50 chance that either will win in a given situation); and (3) love can destroy self anytime. We often pick (1) and (2) as the motto for our life, and the result is an up-and-down Christian experience.

"Do not therefore conclude that the upward path is the hard and the downward road the easy way. All along the road that leads to

death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God's love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves. It is true that Satan's path is made to appear attractive, but it is all a deception; in the way of evil there are bitter remorse and cankering care."<sup>2</sup> "God does not give us up because of our sins. We may make mistakes and grieve His Spirit, but when we repent and come to Him with contrite hearts, He will not turn us away."<sup>3</sup>

"Christ does not drive but draws men unto Him. The only compulsion which He employs is the constraint of love."<sup>4</sup>

Love is the only method that God uses, and it is stronger than self.

## REACT

1. Will anyone be lost because of the sins he or she has committed? Why or why not?

2. Who has the greater burden for your redemption and struggle with self—God or you? Explain.

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1. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.

2. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 139.

3. *Faith and Works*, p. 35.

4. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 127.

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by Donn La Tour

Donn La Tour is a graduate student in biochemistry at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

# The Good News of the Postconversion Struggle

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## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Rom. 7:14-24**

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In Romans 7:14-24 we are confronted with a passage that Christendom has turned into a battlefield of raging debates throughout the ages. Here we find Paul's classic description of the struggle against sin. Some argue that this is clearly a preconversion struggle, because surely a Christian does not have such monumental difficulties with sin. After all, Christians are new creatures, immune from such difficulties. Others, on the other hand, argue that Paul is talking about the converted individual, because Christians will go to their graves, fighting temptation.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, when we reduce this passage to a "pre"conversion/"post"conversion debate, we miss the point Paul is making. In context he is talking about the function of the law.

Paul, through a hypothetical "I," illustrates not only his personal struggle while living under the law apart from Christ, but also the struggle of everyone who lives separated from Jesus.<sup>2</sup> He describes this life as one of disappointment and defeat—living death (see verse 24). It is a life of total frustration, completely void

of assurance. In this desperate struggle the law leads the sinner to Christ (see Gal. 3:24), where he experiences the assurance of salvation found in Romans 7:25: "Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free" (TLB).

Paul often compares the believer's fight against sin to Olympic training. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 he indicates that the Christian struggle toward growth and maturity has no anabolic-steroid shortcuts. The Christian walk entails athletic discipline and striving to be number one by overcoming (often by fierce struggle) the obstacles of our sinful human nature (see Heb. 12:1-4). Christians struggle, but they do so with confidence because Christ is on their side. "Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:24, 25, NIV).

So instead of debating on which side of conversion Romans belongs, let us rejoice individually and corporately that our salvation is sure in Christ.

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1. John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), vol. 1, pp. 256-259.

2. C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.), pp. 107, 108.

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by Mark Fulop

Mark Fulop is a graduate of the Loma Linda University School of Health, Loma Linda, California.

# The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

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## HOW-TO

Key Text: Phil. 3:13, 14

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Paul sounds so mixed up in Romans 7, doesn't he? All this talk about "I do what I don't want to do, and I can't seem to do what I want to do." He goes on to say that he has a spiritual self that wants to do right, but his sinful self is continually messing up his good intentions. Then he starts in on the law's being holy and good, but it functions only because sin is present.

Try reading Romans 7 straight through if you haven't already done that this week. It's like a serpentine mountain road with plenty of dizzying hairpin turns. There's the "good" law, or the commandments. Then there's the "bad" role of sin. And to top it off, Paul adds consideration of our works, which are often downright ugly. There they are: the good, the bad, and the ugly, all so closely related in this chapter that it creates a mental maze.

Quite frankly, it can be depressing to look at Romans 7, because it's a picture of ourselves—that messy mix of kindness and selfishness that dwells in each of us. One can just imagine Paul sighing in the midst of his dictation and mumbling to himself, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

In Romans 7 Paul goes through a process that each one of us must face in our relationship with Christ.

1. *We need to see the "wretched man" in ourselves.* Perhaps we don't wrestle enough with this deep sort of sadness when looking at ourselves. We should pray that we may see ourselves as we really are, that we will truly know our deep need of God. We understand more of the value of God's gift when we see how little we deserve it. A danger exists in seeing ourselves clearly, however: we might become so discouraged that we don't continue on to the next step of our experience—acceptance of God's love and forgiveness. Paul saw himself and despaired, but he didn't stop there.

2. *We need to leave the confusion of the "wretched man" behind in acceptance of God's gift of salvation through Jesus.* Paul followed up his cry of despair with "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Jesus is the only answer to the mix of the good, the bad, and the ugly in us. In accepting His love and knowing our growth in Him, we can leave that confusion behind, perfectly trusting in Him to take care of it for us. He has promised to take the burden from us, to give us rest (see Matt. 11:28). We no longer have to carry that "body of

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by Ginger Ketting

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death" that Paul refers to, because Jesus has already taken that for us in His own death. Think of it—He's taken care of it for you! No wonder Paul burst out with thanks to God!

3. *We need to press on toward the goal to win the prize.* God has not called us to a euphoric one-time experience of His love,

but to a daily "race," as it were, an ongoing journey. So, as did the apostle Paul, we must wrestle and fight and pray and through it all give thanks and praise that we are privileged to know a love beyond comprehension. And we can look forward to that day when the bad and the ugly will fall away, and the good alone will remain.

Friday, November 9

# Delivery From Sin

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## OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 7:24, 25

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As an expert pilot awes a novice with the dependable physical properties of aerodynamics, Paul has made clear to his readers that all attempts to remain aloft as a righteous Christian are neutralized by the constant pull of gravity caused by a sinful nature. In Romans 7:13 he intentionally initiates some philosophical considerations to serve as a spiritual analogy of our pilot's practical demonstration of a "graveyard spin."

The awareness that one's own desire cannot modify a sinful nature, the disposition to do what is right, the inevitable tendency to err, and the certain accusation by the law (which is good in itself) leads Paul to a circular pattern of reasoning for which the only way out is the conclusion "What a wretched man I am!" (verse 24, NIV).

In a similar manner, we are often led to stop and examine ourselves. We find out that despite all our efforts to live a reasonably adequate life, our day-to-day life is plagued with acts that bring shame and uncertainty—an evidence that the process of salvation may not, in fact, be taking place. These may be the attractions of money, power, or influence; inadequate family relations; or personal differences. They may also be feelings of rebel-

lion against the church, society, or God.

Paul does not allow the feelings of hopelessness and despair that he describes to linger without a concise and comforting solution: "Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (verse 25, NIV). Our only hope, according to Paul, lies in shifting our attention from these distressing phenomena to Him who has overcome and who is willing to forgive (see 1 John 1:9) and to make a complete change in our nature. The Lord promises: "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh" (Eze. 11:19, NIV).

Even late in his life, Paul looks back to what he has preached and ponders: "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it [i.e., perfection]" (Phil. 3:13, NIV). For him, perhaps for you, and certainly for me, the difficult step to take is that one of "forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead" (verse 13, NIV).

## REACT

1. Is my attention turned to the things the world has to offer, to the problems I struggle with, or to the goal and prize Jesus has set for me?

2. What most easily diverts my attention from the important promises God has given to me throughout the Bible?

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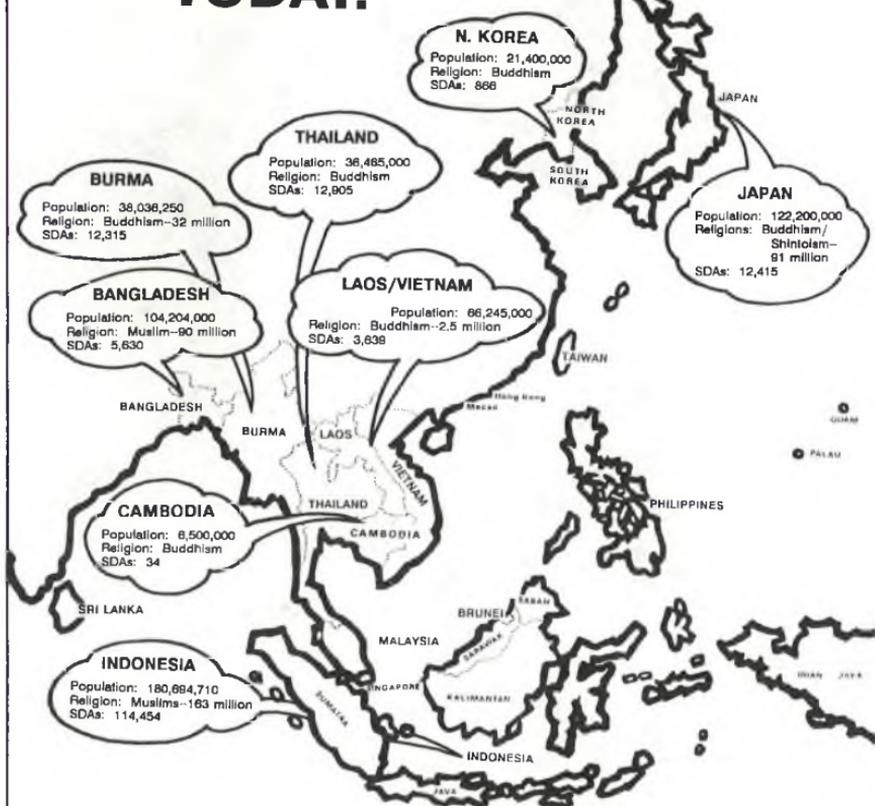
by Jolio C. Barbosa

Jolio C. Barbosa is enrolled in the M.D./Ph.D. program at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

# THE CHALLENGE IS GREAT !!!

LOOK AT  
THE PICTURE  
AS IT STANDS  
TODAY.

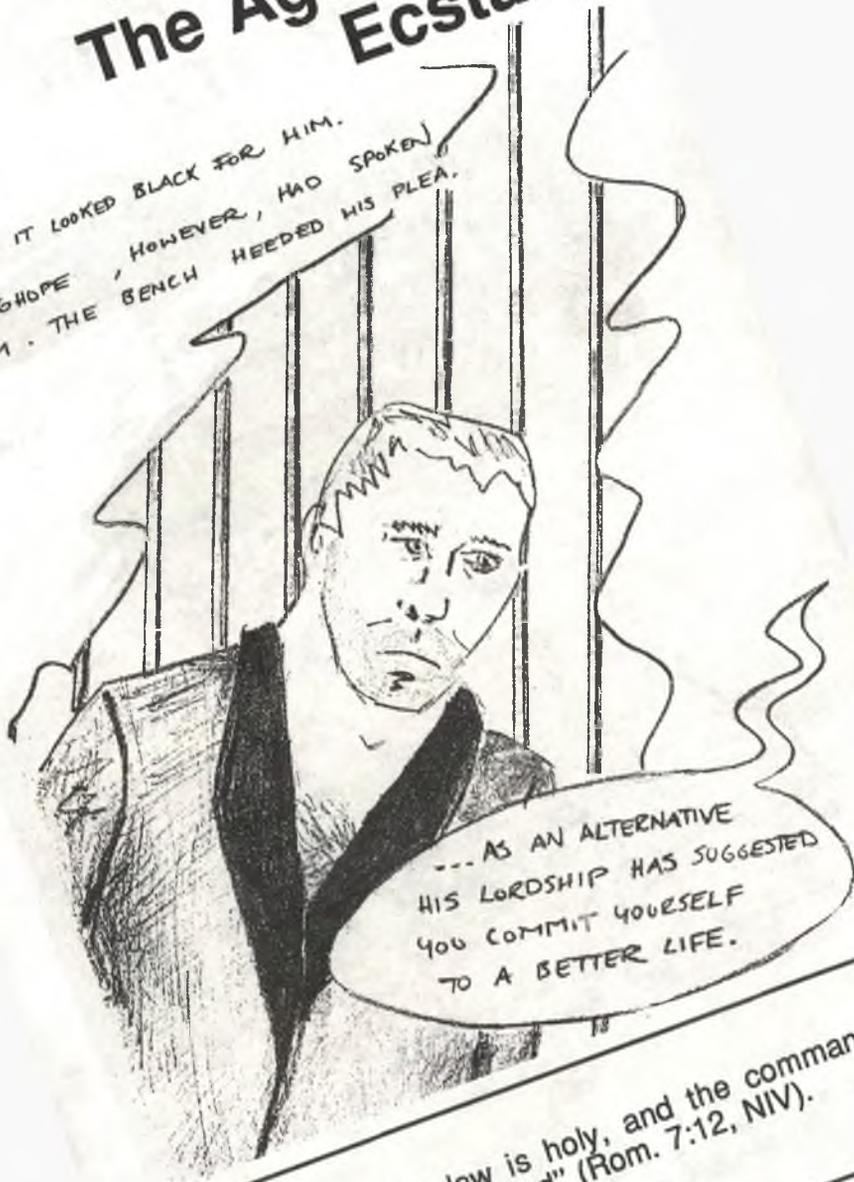
THE  
FAR EAST  
NEEDS  
\$500,000  
FOR GLOBAL  
STRATEGY  
PROJECTS



**WE PLAN TO REACH THE UNREACHED.  
WE ARE SERIOUS! WILL YOU HELP US MEET THE  
CHALLENGE ON DECEMBER 29, 1990?**

Lesson 7, November 11 - 17  
**The Agony and Ecstasy**

IN COURT IT LOOKED BLACK FOR HIM.  
LORD LONGHOPE, HOWEVER, HAD SPOKEN  
FOR HIM. THE BENCH HEEDED HIS PLEA.



... AS AN ALTERNATIVE  
HIS LORDSHIP HAS SUGGESTED  
YOU COMMIT YOURSELF  
TO A BETTER LIFE.

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"So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is  
holy, righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12, NIV).

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Sunday, November 11

## Good News

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### INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 8

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Do you ever feel afraid that someday, despite your best efforts, you will be lost? More than anyone, you realize inside how pitiful your "best efforts" really are. This is discouraging, and you may react in a couple of ways. Perhaps you ignore your fears, hoping God will reward your attempts to earn salvation. Or perhaps you decide the Christian life is just impossible, and you give up even trying.

If you can imagine finding yourself in either of these situations, Romans 8 has some incredibly good news for you! In fact, your biggest obstacle may be that it seems too good to be true.

What does it say? In verses 1 and 2 Paul writes, "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death" (NIV).

Verse 15 says, "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship" (NIV).

These passages describe the miraculous transformation that

takes place when we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour. The first miracle is that we are no longer afraid for our salvation. The second, almost unbelievable, miracle is that we are set "free from the law of sin and death." We are no longer bound to sin.

Each day, as we renew our commitment to Him, the Spirit molds and fashions our wills so that we lose our desire for sin. This is the miracle!

Read verses 5 and 6, NIV: "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace," because "the sinful mind is hostile to God" (verse 7, NIV).

Now we discover another gift. Peace. This comes with the assurance of knowing that Jesus is our Saviour and that He has accepted us into His love. No longer do we struggle to control events in our lives. We turn over everything to the Lord, trusting that He knows best what will prepare us to live throughout eternity in a perfect heaven.

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by Patricia Gentry Guthrie

Patricia Gentry Guthrie, a graduate of Southern College in Tennessee and of Loma Linda University School of Public Health, is a mother, freelance writer and producer, and newsletter editor at Loma Linda University church, Loma Linda, California.

# To Love as Christ Loves

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## LOGOS

### Rom. 8

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Not long ago I attended a Bible study in which we discussed Revelation 14. During the discussion a former classmate, now working as an emergency-room (ER) physician in a relatively isolated town in the southern California desert, shared an experience.

Apparently two marines on leave had stopped by the freeway to help another motorist. As they had walked toward the disabled vehicle, a drunk driver had plowed into them. By the time they were brought into the ER, where my classmate was on duty, one marine had already died; the other, seriously injured, required extensive time and effort to stabilize.

By this point in her story my classmate was obviously shaken, and the rest of us, scarcely breathing, were riveted to our seats by her emotion. She then went on to describe how the drunk driver, who had sustained only minor injuries, cursed her and the ER staff for their delay and general incompetence.

In a choked voice my classmate declared her hatred for a man who could act like that while lying not more than 20 feet from the man he had killed just hours before. She then looked up, at nobody in particular, and with an almost pleading expression said something that cut to the soul of everyone present, something that

will always echo in my thoughts: "How do we love a man like this? I can't. *I need help.*"

By the time we get to Romans 8, Paul has made it abundantly clear that we all need help. In previous chapters Paul demonstrates that no one in his natural, sinful state can hope to please God. In chapter 7 Paul states that even the born-again person, who sincerely directs his desires toward serving God, cannot of himself do so, because of the interference of the sinful nature, the "law of sin" (verse 23). Here Paul emphasizes the state of the spiritual Christian—the battle between the Christian's inherited sinful nature and the God-given spiritual nature.

Paul commences chapter 8 with the statement "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (verse 1, RSV). To live under the control of our inherited sinful nature is to break God's law, to sin (see verse 7). And to sin is to stand condemned. That is to say, our own actions condemn us (see 5:12-21). God does not condemn us (see John 3:17); He strives unceasingly to save us.

With this in mind, we can see that to stand without condemnation is to answer to a power other than our inherited sinful nature. Paul describes this power as the "law of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:2). The "law of the Spirit" is the work of the Holy Spirit in us to free us from the dominion of our sinful nature (though it does not rid us

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by James M. Pappas

James M. Pappas is a pathology resident at Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, California.

of that nature's presence).

Writing to Christians, Paul says, "But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (verse 9, RSV). The indwelling of the Holy Spirit must be important, for Paul mentions it three times (see verses 9-11).

Paul does not explain *how* the Holy Spirit brings about change in us, and ultimately it doesn't matter. The fact remains: if the Spirit is in us, we belong to Christ; if not, we don't.

Paul then makes it clear that our response to the new, God-given part of ourselves is a change of deeds (see verses 12-17). In verse 7 he notes that the person who takes orders from the law of sin (the sinful nature)

"does not submit to God's law" and indeed "cannot" (RSV). But in verse 13, he maintains that we must "put to death the deeds of the body" by the power of "the Spirit" (RSV). Romans 13:8 best expresses how we do this in practical terms: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law" (RSV).

*How liberated from sin do you feel?*

*How do you put to death the misdeeds of the body?*

*When bad memories or unhealthy thoughts enter your mind, what have you found most helpful in dealing with them?*

*When did you first realize you needed to turn control of your life over to the Holy Spirit? What happened?*

# A Precious Promise

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## TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 8:37

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What a precious promise! In whatever predicament we find ourselves God always promises us "full victory through God who showed his love for us" (Rom. 8:37, EB)

"The human family have all the help that Christ had in their conflicts with Satan. They need not be overcome. They may be more than conquerors through Him who has loved them and given His life for them. 'Ye are bought with a price' (1 Cor. 6:20). And what a price! The Son of God in His humanity wrestled with the very same fierce, apparently overwhelming temptations that assail men—temptations to indulgence of appetite, to presumptuous venturing where God has not led them, and to the worship of the god of this world, to sacrifice an eternity of bliss for the fascinating pleasures of this life. Everyone will be tempted, but the Word declares that we shall not be tempted above our ability to bear. We may resist and defeat the wily foe."<sup>1</sup>

"Those who are adopted into the family of God are transformed by His Spirit. Self-indulgence and supreme love for self are changed for self-denial and supreme love for God. No man inherits holiness as a birthright, nor can he, by any methods that he can devise, become loyal to God. 'Without me,' Christ says, 'ye can do nothing'

(John 15:5). Human righteousness is as 'filthy rags.' But with God all things are possible. In the strength of the Redeemer, weak, erring man can become more than conqueror over the evil that besets him."<sup>2</sup>

"The corruptions of this degenerate age have stained many souls who have been professedly serving God. But even now it is not too late for wrongs to be righted and for the blood of a crucified and risen Saviour to atone in your behalf if you repent and feel your need of pardon."<sup>3</sup>

"The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints. Every thorn that wounds our feet has wounded His. Every cross that we are called to bear He has borne before us. The Lord permits conflicts, to prepare the soul for peace. The time of trouble is a fearful ordeal for God's people; but it is the time for every true believer to look up, and by faith he may see the bow of promise encircling him."<sup>4</sup>

## REACT

1. How often are you personally victorious? How does your actual experience relate to Romans 8:37?

2. What are the personal experiences that often come between you and God?

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1. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 95.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 310.

3. *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 478.

4. *The Great Controversy*, p. 633.

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by Bronwen F. Watts

Bronwen F. Watts is a staff chaplain at Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, California.

Wednesday, November 14

## Whose Responsibility?

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### EVIDENCE

Key Text: Gen. 4:6, 7

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In the Logos we noted not only that our sinful human nature leads us all to sin (see Rom. 5), but also that the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit breaks the dominion sin has over us (see Rom. 8). Two questions follow: (1) how do we receive the Spirit, and (2) how do we grow in the Spirit?

The Spirit is a gift to those who ask for it (see 2 Cor. 1:22). Many of us think that having seen ourselves as we are and felt sorry, we can approach God for the gift of the Spirit and stop at that point. This is a fallacy.

God told Cain before he murdered his brother that "sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but *you* must master it" (Gen. 4:7, RSV). God put the responsibility on Cain. In Luke 13:24 Christ tells us to "strive to enter by the narrow door" (RSV). In Philippians 2:12 Paul says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (RSV). We know we need the indwelling Spirit in order to resist the devil. From the moment we sense our need of Christ, we must con-

sciously choose to allow Him continuous, unhindered access to our mind.

The first and most important way to do this is through prayer and Bible study, both of which lead to witness. So prayer, Bible study, and witness are all direct avenues by which God through the Spirit gains access to our mind.

Let's go a step further. If, for example, we choose a lifestyle injurious to our health, we hinder God's work in our minds. If we make keeping up with the Joneses our first priority, God has to compete. And so it goes. These examples have nothing to do with "works" but have everything to do with choice.

Certainly God helps us to make wise choices. But the responsibility to choose is ultimately ours. God does not choose for us. He stands at the door and knocks; He doesn't open it. By our choices we must make our mind a place suitable for the God of the universe to reign supreme. Then, by the power of the Spirit, God can write His law on our mind (see 2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 8:10). Only then can we learn to love as Christ loves.

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by James M. Pappas

James M. Pappas is a pathology resident at Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, California.

Thursday, November 15

# Take Off the Blinders

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## HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 8:12-15

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People used to put blinders on horses to keep them centered on one task—that of pulling the cart. Blinders kept them from seeing what was really out there and getting distracted. We human beings, under Satan's influence and control, are like a horse with blinders on. We can see straight ahead and only what Satan allows us to see. Let's take the blinders off and see what he has made us miss. If we see it, then we can accept it and believe it.

1. *Christ was victorious (see Rom. 5:19). Jesus lived a perfect life, and because of His obedience we can be made righteous through Him.*

2. *Through Christ we are sons and daughters of God (see 8:14-17). Satan would like us to believe that God has abandoned us. This couldn't be further from the truth. We were lost, and He*

came looking for us and died to find us.

3. *We are not obligated to live on the lower level (see verse 12). Because Christ won the victory, His victory can be ours. We will make mistakes, but we can have victory over the sinful nature with the Holy Spirit's help.*

4. *Today, right now, we can change how we live, think, and treat people (see verses 9-11). So often we think that we have to do everything ourselves. We think that living a victorious life in Christ is a one-man show. It isn't! Satan, with his blinders on us, would like us to think so and become discouraged. Romans 8 gives us the encouragement that we are not in this alone, that we can be successful with the help of the Holy Spirit because Christ has already won the battle.*

## REACT

With the acceptance of these four principles, do you have any responsibilities? If so, what are they?

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by Mike Boyko

Mike Boyko is a dentist and part-time instructor in oral surgery at Loma Linda University School of Dentistry, Loma Linda, California.

Friday, November 16

# The Winning Side

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## OPINION

Key Text: 1 John 5:12

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There is something about being on the winning side. We all want to be on the victorious ball team or, at the end of an evening of Monopoly, to have both Boardwalk and Park Place, with hotels on each of them. We love our hometown team to win, and even if we aren't actually out there on the field, we feel pride when the players bring home the World Series pennant or the Super Bowl trophy.

In the game of life we can all be winners. We can choose the victorious side. Some innings remain to be played, but the deciding one was completed 2,000 years ago by the Captain.

Being on the winning side functions well as a metaphor, but how do we find the assurance that it is our actual experience? We can never work up the assurance from within ourselves. The Holy Spirit creates that certainty in our hearts. Romans 8:6 reads, "The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace" (NIV). The assurance comes when we believe that Jesus is Christ, and allow His Spirit to work in us. By giving ourselves over to the direc-

tion of the Spirit, we can be sure of our future. Through this confidence we can face difficult situations in life. The assurance of spiritual security on the winning side enables us to know that we are sons and daughters of the King of the universe, the owner and general manager of the team. Knowing who we are in Christ keeps us from being sidelined because of injuries or lack of confidence.

One of the ultimate rewards of being a winner is that we can, working in concert with the Holy Spirit, reach out to someone on the losing team and make him or her a winner as well.

This procedure sounds so simple to follow that we allow Satan to let doubt creep into our minds. He wants us to think, *It can't be that easy*. But it is just that simple. If we trust and obey Christ, are open to the Spirit's direction, and love others, the time will come when doubting will give way to assurance.

## REACT

How often are you sidelined because of spiritual "injuries"? What are some of the experiences that have hindered you in the past but that you can now face confidently with the Spirit's coaching?

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by Mike Boyko

Mike Boyko is a dentist and part-time instructor in oral surgery at Loma Linda University School of Dentistry, Loma Linda, California.

Lesson 8, November 18 - 24

# Losers-Finders/ Keepers-Weepers

DAN PROTESTED HIS INNOCENCE, BUT  
SERGEANT RYAN WASN'T A MAN  
TO ARGUE.



"As he says in Hosea: 'I will call them "my people" who are not my people; and I will call her "my loved one" who is not my loved one' "(Rom. 9:25, NIV).

Sunday, November 18

# An Old Man and a Child

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## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 9

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An old man sat at his desk with pen in hand. The room was dark except for a tiny desk light, which made his beard appear whiter and his wrinkles deeper. His head was bent low to the desk as he began to write. After a few minutes of writing, he laid his pen down, raised his head, and stared out a nearby window.

"What are you doing?" came a small voice from the hall.

He turned his head to find a small child watching him. "I'm writing a letter," he responded slowly.

"But you aren't writing. You're looking out the window."

"You are right about that." He smiled. "But it's because what I need to write is difficult, and since I am writing to somebody special, I want to make it clear."

Her eyes widened, and her voice lowered to a whisper. "Did somebody die?"

"No, but some people don't understand how to really live, and that is worse than death."

She seemed puzzled. "You mean somebody's not dead, but he's not living either?"

"That's right. It happens

when people expect certain things from God just because they belong to a certain church or have certain labels." His voice grew more determined. "But a label doesn't mean anything. God wants friendships, not just labels." He took a deep breath. "Do you understand?"

"Nooo."

He reached over and put his finger to her heart. "Under there is your heart. That is what is important to God." Then he tugged at the hem of her dress. "This would be called a label. It is not as important to God. Some people think that if they dress 'right,' God will like them better, but God wants people's hearts. He will take care of dressing them. Do you understand?"

She nodded. Then she crawled up in his lap and looked at the letter on the desk. "So who is this special letter to?" she questioned.

He pulled her close and whispered in her ear. "It is addressed to you, my little one. It is addressed to you."

"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart" (Rom. 9:2, NIV). "It is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring" (verse 8, NIV).

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by Carla Gober

Carla Gober is a clinical specialist for spiritual care at Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, California.

# Pedigree or Promise?

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## LOGOS

Rom. 9

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### What Went Wrong With My People? (read Rom. 9:1-5)

*"I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart" (verse 2). "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (10:1).*

Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, written less than 30 years after Christ's ascension to heaven, is his most organized presentation of the gospel. Chapters 1-3 underscore the universal sinfulness of the human family and its lost condition (see 3:19). Chapters 3-5 delineate the doctrine of justification: Heaven's method of saving sinners who accept Jesus Christ as Saviour, trusting in the merits of His atoning death and sinless life (see 3:22-26; 4:5-7; and 5:1). The apostle elaborates the doctrine of sanctification in chapters 6-8. And, finally, in chapters 12-15 he discusses the impact of the Christian's life on his fellow Christians, community, and state.

Breaking this natural flow of the subject, Paul inserts an excursus on his people, the nation of Israel (see 9-11). Why had Israel rejected the "gospel of Christ" when "it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (1:16)? God Himself had chosen Abraham and his descendants and elected them to be His agents to channel to all the

earth the good news of salvation from sin. "In thee" (Gen. 12:3), God had said, "and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (22:18). Later He was to say: "Mine house [the temple] shall be called an house of prayer for all people" (Isa. 56:7). What had gone wrong? Had God failed?

Paul sorrowed for his kinsfolk who, as a nation, had turned their back on the Messiah. Like Moses, he was willing to be lost himself if such a sacrifice would bring them into a saving union with Christ (see Ex. 32:30-33). God had endowed the Israelites with every privilege so as to make them a powerful spiritual force in the earth. He had adopted them to be His "firstborn" son among the nations (4:22; Deut. 7:6-8). For 40 years a glorious pillar of cloud and fire, a visible token of God's presence, had led the nation in its migration from Egypt.

The Jews were the recipients of the covenant promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and to the nation at Sinai. Some of their ancestors had actually heard God speak the Ten Commandments, and to Israel He had entrusted the written Scriptures (see Rom. 3:1, 2). The sanctuary (tabernacle/temple) had taught them the gospel in type (see Heb. 4:1, 2). Above all, the Promised One, the Messiah, had come to them through the lineage of David (see Rom. 1:1-4) with His hands outstretched to save (see 10:21).

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by Frank Holbrook

Frank Holbrook is an associate director in the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference.

## God's Plan Had Not Failed (read Rom. 9:6-13)

*"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (verse 6).*

Three prominent threads of thought weave through the tapestry of Paul's argument in this passage: (1) physical lineage with Abraham does not guarantee salvation; (2) God is not obligated to use the lineal descendants of Abraham as His chosen agents; and (3) God is a sovereign Lord; He can carry out His purposes as He chooses.

While the Jews considered themselves to be in a saved condition *because* they had a genealogical connection with Abraham, both John the Baptist and Jesus, as well as Paul, had taught that only a spiritual Israelite was a true Jew (see Matt. 3:9; John 8:33, 39; and Rom. 2:28, 29). Only the *Israelite of faith*, who met the conditions of the covenant relation with God, was acceptable to Him. Throughout Israel's history of backsliding, a faithful remnant had always remained true—as illustrated by the 7,000 in Elijah's time and the believing Jews in Paul's day (see 11:4, 5).

"The children of the flesh [the physical descendants of Abraham] . . . are not the children of God: but the children of the promise [believers in Christ] *are counted for the seed*" (9:8; cf. Gal. 3:29).

This is evident from the fact that God had chosen Isaac over Ishmael to be the progenitor of Israel, although Ishmael was also Abraham's son (see Rom. 9:9). Again, before the twins Esau and Jacob were born, God had chosen, or elected, Jacob (rather than Esau) to be the one through whom He would develop the nation of Israel and through whose line the Messiah would come (see verses 10-13).

God had not been unjust, or un-

righteous (see verse 14), to choose Isaac and Jacob over Ishmael and Esau to carry out His purposes. The implication that lies beneath the surface of Paul's argument is that God had not been unrighteous to replace unbelieving national Israel with spiritual Israel—the church, made up of born-again Jews and Gentiles—as His chosen agent (see Matt. 21:43; 1 Peter 2:9, 10; and Gal. 6:15, 16).

God's sovereign action in choosing Isaac and Jacob to be progenitors of Israel had not prevented the personal salvation of Ishmael and Esau. Both had been taught the same truths about God as had been taught to Isaac and Jacob. Both had had the same opportunities to respond to God's grace. There had been no lack in the divine compassion to save these young men. They had simply chosen for themselves to elect out of the circle of God's care. The choice had been theirs, not God's.

## Israel Trips Over the Rock (read Rom. 9:30-33)

*"They stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed" (verses 32, 33).*

Although the Gentiles were "without Christ" and were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, . . . having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12), they experienced a wonderful deliverance from the shackles of sin when Christians shared the gospel of Jesus with them (see Rom. 9:30). But Israel, with her insights from Scripture and her historical experience with God, found nothing but discomfort and a deadening religious experience based on works. What was the matter?

Paul puts his finger on the pulse of God's plan of salvation:

Jesus Christ. He is pivotal, foundational to the whole saving process. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

When the Gentile asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" the Christian answer was unequivocal: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (16:30, 31). And when by faith they embraced Christ as Saviour, they found "the righteousness which is of faith" (Rom. 9:30) granted to them (see Eph. 2:8-10).

But Israel, in spite of her rich spiritual treasures, sought to save herself by her own works of law (see Rom. 9:31, 32). Unfortunately, the Jews stumbled over the Rock, the Saviour, upon whom they could have built a safe and sure experience (see verses 32, 33). The truth that a crucified Messiah had borne their sins (see

Isa. 53:6) and paid the penalty by dying in their behalf tripped them up (see 1 Cor. 1:23; 15:3). They would not accept such a Messiah. Paul sadly watched them trying with great zeal to earn saving merit with God, refusing the gifts of saving righteousness and eternal life from the hands nailed to the cross. They opted for a pedigree rather than God's promises!

*What spiritual privileges do SDAs have more than any other Christian group?*

*How could SDAs unwittingly adopt the pedigree reasoning of the Jews?*

*If "pedigree" is not a saving factor, what value is there in being reared an SDA? See Romans 3:1, 2.*

*Is it really legalism to be obedient to the known will of God? Why or why not?*

*What makes a person of any ethnic origin a true descendant of Abraham? See Galatians 3:7, 29.*

Tuesday, November 20

## Choices in the Bible

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### TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 9:6-24

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Isaac and Rebekah's hopes and desires centered in the promises made to Abraham. Jacob and Esau "were taught to regard the birthright as a matter of great importance, for it included not only an inheritance of worldly wealth but spiritual pre-eminence. He who received it was to be the priest of his family, and in the line of his posterity the Redeemer of the world would come."<sup>1</sup> But there were obligations as well. "He who should inherit its blessings must devote his life to the service of God. Like Abraham, he must be obedient to the divine requirements. In marriage, in his family relations, in public life, he must consult the will of God.

"Isaac made known to his sons these privileges and conditions. . . . But Esau had no love for devotion, no inclination to a religious life. The requirements that accompanied the spiritual birthright were an unwelcome and even hateful restraint to him. . . . Bent on self-indulgence, he desired nothing so much as liberty to do as he pleased."<sup>2</sup>

Jacob was just the opposite. His greatest desire was for the privileges associated with the birthright. "His mind was ever reaching forward to the future, and seeking to grasp its unseen blessings."<sup>3</sup>

Even though the contrast be-

tween Jacob and Esau was foretold by an angel before their birth, "there was no arbitrary choice on the part of God, by which Esau was shut out from the blessings of salvation. The gifts of His grace through Christ are free to all."<sup>4</sup>

Many other Bible stories present choices. Consider Joseph in Potiphar's house, Moses leading the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan, Elijah on Mount Carmel, Daniel in the lions' den, and Jesus in the wilderness. Other characters made decisions that cost them their lives—Uzzah, Ananias and Sapphira, and the people of Noah's day.

Also consider these thoughts: "The fate of Uzzah was a divine judgment upon the violation of a most explicit command."<sup>5</sup> Ananias had not been compelled to sacrifice his possessions. "He had acted from choice. But in attempting to deceive the disciples, he had lied to the Almighty."<sup>6</sup> Moses struck the rock contrary to God's command. "The eyes of all Israel were upon Moses, and his sin cast a reflection upon God, who had chosen him as the leader of His people."<sup>7</sup> Moses often demonstrated great patience, yet he was kept out of the Promised Land because he lost his temper.

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 177.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 178.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 705.

6. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 73.

7. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 420.

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by Rhonda S. Hobson

Rhonda S. Hobson is an administrative assistant at Loma Linda University School of Business, Riverside, California.

# God's Election

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## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Rom. 9:15**

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The apostle Paul has constant pain in his heart for his "brothers, those of my own race" (Rom. 9:3, NIV), on behalf of whom he would gladly cut himself off from salvation in Christ. But Paul is not only grieved but also perplexed by a theological problem: If the Jewish people are the heirs of God's promises, as according to the Scriptures they are, then how does one explain the fact that they have not received the fulfillment of God's promise in Jesus Christ? Has God rejected His people? Does God reject those whom He formerly chose, and is His election temporary and contingent? These are the questions with which Paul now wrestles.

Turning to the question of whether God has rejected His people, Paul answers that quite obviously He has not—at least, not all of them. Paul, himself a Jew, has been reconciled in Christ. And other Jews also believe in Jesus—Jewish Christians. Thus, a *remnant* of Israel, now part of the "new Israel," has not been rejected.

But what about the *majority* of the Jewish nation—has God ultimately rejected them? Paul answers that God most assuredly has not, but that His dealings with the Jews, like all His acts, must be understood in terms of His mercy. The Jews rejected the gospel, but their failure to believe has meant

great blessing for the Gentiles. Paul foresees a day when many Jews, jealous of the election of the Gentiles, will return and believe (see 11:25). This does not mean that Paul teaches universal salvation of the Jews. God forces salvation upon no one. If people (Jew or Gentile) harden their hearts against the gospel, He does not interfere with their choice. The hardening is of their own choosing, and no one must lay the responsibility for it upon God (see 9:8).

Paul then reminds the Gentiles that they had better not boast of their new status. Reconciled now only by faith, they are not so secure that God in His freedom cannot reject them. If God did not spare the Jews, it is an eventuality to be reckoned with that He may not spare the Gentiles either!

A person in the presence of God can never have what the world calls certainty. A person before God is always a person in hope, a person at prayer, a person with empty hands outstretched to receive God's gift of life. One's hope, expectation, and certainty can be only in One other than oneself. One's security can never be self-initiated, self-preserved, or self-vindicated. Therefore, the Gentiles, the elect of God made righteous by faith, dare not boast!

## REACT

What is the relationship between the idea of God's election "not by works but by him who calls" (Rom. 9:12, NIV) and the idea of righteousness by faith?

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by Graham Blingham

Graham Blingham is editor of COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY.

Thursday, November 22

# The Fleeceless Method to Know God's Will

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## HOW-TO

Key Text: Luke 10:27, 28

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Books have been written on the subject of man's free choice and God's control. However, in this section we will focus on several simple points that will help us know with confidence that we are following God's leading.

First, we must start with a warning. God rarely reveals His will in voices in the night, dreams, wet fleeces, or open doors (how many times have you had several equally open doors at the same time?). Second, Romans 9 teaches that God is more interested in giving us free choice than in controlling us like robots. Therefore, in discerning His will, we must use our mind and act responsibly. The following three questions can help us make the right decision when we try to determine God's will.

1. *How is this decision accountable to Christ?* Many books on God's will stress the importance of acting in harmony with God's principles (e.g., the Ten Commandments). I would add that we should act in harmony with our understanding of God's principles as they were manifested in Christ's life. Through prayer, study, song, and worship we come to understand Jesus as a friend. If we choose to act as we believe

He would act, then we are in God's will. In other words, it is not stupid to ask what kind of car Jesus would drive.

2. *How is this decision accountable to the body of Christ?* All believers are mystically bound together as the body of Christ. We must make choices from the perspective of our influence on the fellowship of believers. As we learn to be open, honest, and real with other Christians, our desires become spiritually bound up in mutual interest. In other words, we must make our decisions in the context of accountability to one another and not simply in a personal vacuum. To be in God's will is to be concerned with the positive or negative impact of our decisions on the body of believers.

3. *How is this decision accountable to the unredeemed?* We Christians must view God's will and leading in the context of those to whom we minister. In our decisions we must ask ourselves whether our choices will enable us to extend our ministry to those needing the reconciling love of Christ. God's will and leading must direct us to positions of greater ministry and service. We must become imbued with a deep sense of compassion that asks, Will this decision bond me to, or alienate me from, others needing the love of God?

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by Mark Fulop

Mark Fulop is a graduate of the Loma Linda University School of Public Health, Loma Linda, California.

# God's Will: Divine Invasion or Reasonable Action?

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## OPINION

Key Text: Micah 6:8

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Sometimes when Christians discuss the concept of God's will, their conversation sounds like a trilogy of science-fiction novels. Philip K. Dick wrote describing Valis. Valis was an alien intelligence that randomly beamed information into people's subconscious via an ancient satellite orbiting the earth. Dick writes the following classic dialogue in one of the books:

"Now that he knew an actual world existed as depicted in his dream—as seen in his dream—Nicholas could not be stopped.

"I was right," he told me on returning to the Bay Area. 'It wasn't a dream. Valis was showing me where I ought to be living. I have a destiny down there, Phil, that dwarfs anything you can imagine. It leads to the stars.'

"Did Valis tell you what your destiny down there is?" I asked him.

"No.' He shook his head. 'I'll find out when the time comes. It's the same principle as in the spy services; you're to know only what's necessary for you to know. If you understood the big picture it'd blow your head off. You'd go crazy.'"\*

Is this how God works in our lives? Does He "beam" information into our subconscious, tell-

ing us whom to marry, where to live, and what career to pursue for maximum happiness, health, wealth, and success? I would like to suggest (based on Romans 9) that God is limited by our free choice and doesn't work that way. In fact, I would like to suggest that looking for the magical Urim and Thummim by which God can override our power of choice is often a selfish and self-serving approach to learning His will, which has little to do with such choices.

We read, "He has told you what he wants, and this is all it is: *to be fair and just and merciful, and to walk humbly with your God*" (Micah 6:9, TLB). In other words, God's will is not so much concerned with whom we marry as with how we treat and cherish our spouse. He is not so much concerned with our choice of career as with our use of our work to promote justice, mercy, and compassion. He is not so much concerned with the location of our home as with its demonstration of active compassion for the concerns of the community.

It's time that we stop acting like Nicholas and start concerning ourselves with justice, mercy, compassion, and humility. Only in this way will we know that we are living in God's will.

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\*Philip K. Dick, *Radio Free Albemuth* (New York: Arbor House, 1985), p. 27.

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by Mark Fulop

Mark Fulop is a graduate of the Loma Linda University School of Public Health, Loma Linda, California.

# The CHALLENGE of the UNREACHED

*DID YOU KNOW THAT THERE ARE IN THE FAR EAST*

**521 million unreached people**

*THAT HAVE NOT HEARD THE GOSPEL!*



## WHAT ARE OUR OPTIONS?



### \* NEW WORK TASK FORCE - INDONESIA

"Hi, my name is Dorthea Jacobus. I was enrolled in a university, and was engaged to be married; but the Lord so strongly impressed me of the importance of the New Work Task Force that I spent a year working in an unentered area. Many Muslims have been baptized as the result of our simple approach of teaching health, gardening, and nutrition."--Dorthea Jacobus, Volunteer Worker.

### \* AGRICULTURAL APPROACH TO MUSLIMS - BANGLADESH



"One of the ways we have been able to help Muslim countries is through practical agricultural concepts. There are 80 million Muslims in Bangladesh that have never heard about Jesus. Through this Global Strategy project, we will be able to open sixteen new areas."--S K Das, (from Bangladesh) Global Strategy Analyst, Far Eastern Division.

### \* AN APPROACH TO ALL OF KOREA

"My name is T. S. Shim. I was born in North Korea. For many years, we have not been able to work in my country. The people there do not know about the God we serve. Now the situation may be changing. Indications are that doors may be opening soon.

—T S Shim (from Korea) Asso. Church Ministries Director, Far Eastern Division.



### \* WE WANT TO MEET THE CHALLENGE



"The Far Eastern Division has one giant task, considering that there are 270 million Muslims and 251 million Buddhists in our territory. Most of these people have never read the Bible nor heard of salvation through Christ. We have carefully prepared strategic plans to open work in these unentered areas. Frankly, we are excited about what will happen with your support of World Missions and Global Strategy in the Far East. Thank you for your help."--O C Edwards, President, Far Eastern Division.

**REACHING THE UNREACHED  
THROUGH 13TH SABBATH OFFERING  
AND GLOBAL STRATEGY**



Lesson 9, November 25—December 1

# God and the Jew and You Too



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“For God does not change his mind about whom he chooses and blesses” (Rom. 11:29, TEV).

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Sunday, November 25

# Failure in Your Future?

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## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 11:29

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When he was 7 years old, his family was forced out of its home because of a legal technicality. He had to work to help support family members.

When he was still a backward, shy little boy of 9, his mother died.

At 22 he lost his job as a store clerk. He wanted to go to law school, but his education was not good enough.

At 37, on his third try, he was finally elected to Congress. Two years later he ran again and failed to be reelected. About this time he had what some today would call a nervous breakdown.

At 45 he ran for the Senate and lost.

At 49 he ran for the Senate again and lost again.

At 51, however, he was elected president of the United States, but his second term in office was cut short by his assassination. As he lay dying in a little rooming house, a former detractor spoke this fitting tribute: "Now he belongs to the ages."

His name, of course, was

Abraham Lincoln.

I once heard a wise man say, "The difference between failure and success is what you do with your failures." I don't know a single person who has lived out the exact dreams of his or her youth. The difference between those who have ultimately failed and those who have experienced joy in their life is precisely what they have chosen following failure.

In this lesson we discover that even Israel's corporate failure was not the end for individual Israelites. "Did God reject his people? By no means!" (Rom. 11:1, NIV). "For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" (verse 15, NIV).

Humans may fail, and God may vary His method, but He never abandons His purpose. And God's purpose is grace toward a lost world. "No one who believes in him will be put to shame" (10:11, RSV). For "every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (verse 13, RSV).

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\*Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life* (Portland, Oreg.: Multnomah Press, 1983), pp. 68, 70.

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by Henning Guldhammer

Henning Guldhammer is associate pastor of the Walla Walla College church, College Place, Washington.

# God Keeps His Promise

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## LOGOS

Rom. 11:25, 26

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In Romans 10 and 11, as in chapter 9, Paul shares with the believers in Rome his heartfelt burden concerning the eternal destiny of his own people, the Jews. The context is still the great theme of Romans, righteousness by faith, but the issue he discusses in these chapters is God's fairness in regard to the promise He made to Israel.

The question that Paul raises in Romans 9:6 is this: Does the fact that not all Jews will be saved mean that God has failed to keep His promise? At the end of his discussion Paul answers that God keeps His promise and, therefore, "all Israel shall be saved" (11:26). However, what does the apostle mean by "all Israel"? The answer to this question, as well as the arguments he presents in Romans 10 and 11, is of great significance to all Christians.

### God's Promise to Israel

God gave Israel three fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To these men and their descendants He promised salvation. Nevertheless, at the end of His earthly mission Jesus declared to Israel: "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Matt. 23:38). This naturally raises the question of Romans 9:6: Has God failed to keep His promise? At issue is the fairness of God. The argument of chapter 10 is that the Jewish nation must

take the full responsibility and blame for its lostness, while chapter 11 shows how God will ultimately keep His promise to save Israel.

In Romans 10:1 Paul expresses his heartfelt concern for his fellow Jews and points out in verse 2 where they have failed: "They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." The question is, In what sense did they lack knowledge? Paul has already alluded to the answer in Romans 2:28, 29, but he elaborates on it in more detail in chapter 9: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (verse 6). It is of utmost importance that every Christian discover where the Jews went wrong, for their sad history has been recorded for our benefit, "upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11).

### Israel's Failure

The Jews failed, in the first place, to see God's purpose in giving them three fathers—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their mistake was to identify God's chosen people with the natural descendants of these three men (i.e., Israel according to the flesh [see Rom. 9:6-13]). God's real reason for giving Israel these three fathers was to use them as patterns or prototypes of those who truly constitute His chosen people (see Matt. 8:10-12; 22:31, 32). In other words, Abraham represents faith in God's promised salvation in Christ (see Rom. 4:11-13; Gal. 3:6-9, 27-29); Isaac symbolizes the

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by Jack Sequelra

Jack Sequelra pastors the Walla Walla City church, Walla Walla, Washington.

new birth (see 4:28; John 3:3-7); and Jacob signifies the perseverance of the saints (see Gen. 32:24-28; Matt. 10:22; and Heb. 10:35-39).

Second, failure to see the true significance of the three fathers led the Jews to an even greater failure, and that was their lack of understanding of the gospel itself. They perverted the promise of salvation through Abraham's seed (i.e., Christ [see Gal. 3:16]), which they were to receive by faith, to legalism, or salvation by inheritance and works. This is the main thrust of Romans 10: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (verses 3, 4).

Third, the Jews stubbornly rejected every attempt made by God to rectify the problem. The result was that they persisted in their legalism, which eventually led them deliberately to reject God's promised salvation in Christ. Paul points this out in verses 13-20, concluding in verse 21 with a solemn reference to Isaiah 65:2: "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The implication is clearly that their rejection of the gospel was willful and that, therefore, they must take the full responsibility and blame for their lostness.

### **God Keeps His Promise**

Proceeding to Romans 11, Paul assures his readers that the gift of salvation in Christ has not

been withdrawn from the Jews; he is the living proof: "For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (verse 1). He then points out that throughout history God has always had a faithful remnant among the Jews (see verses 2-5), thus implying the existence of hope for the individual Jew. As for Israel's rejection of the gospel, God was able to turn their failure into good. It opened the way for the good news of salvation to go to the Gentiles (see verses 6-11), even though God never intended salvation to be limited to the Jews (see Gen. 12:3; 17:2-5).

The acceptance of the gospel by the Gentiles in turn will make the Jews jealous, which Paul feels will cause some Jews to reconsider their backsliding and return to God in repentance. The wonderful news is that if God can graft the wild olive branch (i.e., the Gentiles) to the good olive tree (i.e., the faithful of literal Israel), surely He is able to regraft the natural branches (i.e., the once unfaithful but now repentant Jews) back to the mother tree (see Rom. 11:11-24).

The bottom line of Paul's argument is that both Jews and Gentiles are guilty of sin and unbelief, and salvation is entirely a gift, based on God's unconditional love and mercy; this excludes all human boasting. God desires no Jew, or Gentile for that matter, to be lost.

Paul concludes this eleventh chapter with a song of praise, in which he marvels at the unconditional love of God in offering sinful humankind, both Jews and Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of His grace (see verses 33-36).

# The Demands of Salvation

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## TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 10:16

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A life in Christ should be a joyful experience. Personal salvation should be evident in the choices we make and the lifestyle we choose. But the idea of doing good works tends to make people uneasy, because it places expectations and even demands on our behavior.

Ellen White comments specifically of young people: "What they need is that which stimulates and strengthens rather than weakens. . . . [They] are called to endure hardness, as good soldiers."<sup>1</sup>

She goes on to discuss the expectations Daniel and his companions successfully met: "They had learned to sacrifice the earthly to the spiritual, to seek the highest good. And they reaped the reward. Their habits of temperance and their sense of responsibility as representatives of God called to noblest development the powers of body, mind, and soul."<sup>2</sup>

Clearly God had definite expectations of His followers in the past. As Daniel 1:19 and Ellen White point out, the king of Babylon "found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah." Other biblical characters who met God's demands include Moses, Abraham, David, and Noah.

As God's people approach the end of time on this earth, they

will face even greater expectations as they contrast themselves with the world. The Spirit of Prophecy states: "Their minds need to be uplifted, their views of life to be broadened. They need to be aroused from the lethargy of worldly dreaming."<sup>3</sup>

In addition, all of us need to exercise the power of choice. Ellen White makes the following comment on the use of our potential: "God has given every human being a brain. . . . We are to educate and train every power of mind and body—the human mechanism that Christ has bought—in order that we may put it to the best possible use. We are to do all we can to strengthen these powers; for God is pleased to have us become more and still more efficient colaborers with Him."<sup>4</sup>

God's work needs our intellect, yet God gives us each the ability to make our own free choices, to develop individually according to our own particular and unique talents. He does not want us to conform to the demands of the world, yet we cannot totally separate ourselves from the world without impairing our ability to witness. We must find balance, and that comes only from a vital relationship with Jesus Christ.

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1. *Education*, p. 295.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

4. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 100.

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by Donna Jelder

Donna Jelder is a senior psychology major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Wednesday, November 28

# Is God Really Fair?

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## EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rom. 9:30, 31

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Bob trains intensively for the cross-country. Bill wins with a regimen of Häagen-Dazs and Paco's Pizza. Hilary is a homework savant, but it's TV-Terri who gets the grades. Life isn't fair! Take Romans 9:30, 31, for instance: "What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it" (NIV).

Did God change the rule book at halftime? Look at Exodus 20:3-17. Keep the commandments and live. Look again, especially at the preamble to the Decalogue: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (verse 2, NIV). God prefaces the Ten Commandments with a statement of grace. He is the Redeemer! It was not anything the Israelites did that left Pharaoh's army treading water. Israel was saved by grace. At Sinai God is saying, "Keep My laws because you have been saved."

In the New Testament Paul spells out the relationship between Christ and the law: "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Rom. 10:4, NIV).

"The word 'end' (*telos*) has a double sense; it may mean [either] 'goal' or 'termination.' On the other hand, Christ is the goal at which the law aimed in that He is the embodiment of perfect righteousness. . . . On the other hand (and this is the primary force of Paul's words), Christ is the termination of the law in the sense that . . . life and righteousness are available through faith in Christ; therefore no one need attempt any more to win these blessings by means of the law."<sup>1</sup>

Paul also explains Christ's role in our salvation: "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (10:9, NIV).

"The resurrection was the confirmation of Christ's claims, the divine seal on His sacrifice. . . . As contrasted with righteousness by law [verse 5], righteousness by faith depends upon what Christ has done and can do rather than upon what we are able to do."<sup>2</sup>

In chapter 11 Paul explains that God has not rejected the Jews as individuals, even though as a nation they did reject Him. The concept of a "remnant chosen by grace" (verse 5, NIV) emerges as God's plan for the descendants of Abraham.

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1. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1963), p. 203.

2. *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 598.

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by John C. Cress

John C. Cress is the chaplain of Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

# Human Response to God's Grace

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## HOW-TO

Key Text: Heb. 2:1-4

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Although God offers salvation, already an accomplished fact in Christ, as a gift to undeserving sinners, He nevertheless requires a positive response from us so that He may make His salvation effective in us. The reason for this is twofold: (1) God is love, and love does not coerce (see Matt. 23:37, 38; Rom. 1:21-28); and (2) since God created humans with free will, only those who receive the gift of salvation in faith can enjoy it (see John 3:16-18, 36; Rom. 5:17).

In the light of Israel's history and failures recorded for our benefit (see 1 Cor. 10:11, 12), we can learn some important lessons.

### How to Avoid Israel's Mistakes

1. *We must recognize that we are sinners.* The failure to do so was one of the primary problems of the Jews (see Rom. 2:1, 17-24).

2. *We must realize that salvation is only in Christ through God's grace alone.* We cannot contribute one iota toward our salvation but must receive it by faith as a gift from God (see 3:21-28; Eph. 2:8, 9).

3. *We must not mix salvation by faith with salvation by works.*

In Romans 10 Paul makes it clear that righteousness by faith and righteousness by works of the law are two opposing systems of salvation (see verses 3-10).

4. *Realizing that salvation by grace excludes boasting, we must forgo pride.* Pride greatly contributed to the downfall of the Jews, and Seventh-day Adventists are in danger of making the same mistake (see 2:17-29).

### How to Relate to the Jews Despite Their History

Our study of Romans 10 and 11 has much to say to us about the attitude we should have toward the Jews.

1. *We must reject anti-Semitic feelings.* Since Jews and Gentiles do not differ with respect to unbelief and the sin problem (see 3:23; 11:30-32), we have no right to treat Jews with contempt. "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

2. *Realizing that God's love is unconditional and that salvation is still His desire for the Jews, we must do all we can to reach the Jews with the gospel.*

3. *We must sense a special obligation to carry the gospel to the Jews, since they brought it to the Gentiles initially.*

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by Jack Sequelra

Jack Sequelra pastors the Walla Walla City church, Walla Walla, Washington.

Friday, November 30

## If God Is God

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### OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 11:1-6, 22

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"How long do you hesitate between two opinions? If YHWH is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

The person's personal name in Elijah's appeal. God is not an idea, but a personal being. *Baal* really should be *Man* because Baal is man's creation. So Elijah's challenge can be paraphrased like this: "If God is God, follow Him; but if Man is God, follow him."

One of the most difficult parts of the late-twentieth-century Christian life is its context. Even faithful Christians are not immune to slipping into the thought forms and the practices of our time. A popular twentieth-century value is self-reliance. We hold the key to personal success. In this view, human beings are essentially good (god?), and what we need to do is to release the goodness (godness?) in ourselves, and our potential is unlimited.

The biblical world, by contrast, emphasizes human creatureliness, limitedness, and dependence. The way to wholeness is to find our place as creature before our Creator. The main task is to realize (make real) our dependence on Him.

Jesus said, "Unless you change and become like little children,

you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3, NIV). What is it about little children He admired? Their childishness (pettiness)? No. What is the primary fact about children? Is it not their vulnerability? Little children understand their dependence and are not ashamed of it.

Israel failed as a nation because the people became proud of their achievements, proud of who they were in themselves. They wanted to make a name for themselves, to find a place among the nations.

Submitting to God takes *practice*. Daniel practiced submission. Three times a day! He stopped to talk with God and acknowledge his dependence on Him. He loved being dependent.

And so Paul urges us: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will" (Rom. 12:2, NIV).

Drink at the sources that lead you to Him! Experiment! Taste and see!

### REACT

1. Whatever your occupation, what is God calling you to be for Him?

2. What is your Christian vocation?

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by Henning Guldhammer

Henning Guldhammer is associate pastor of the Walla Walla College church, College Place, Washington.

Lesson 10, December 2 - 8

# Straight Talk About Responsibility



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“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom. 12:2, NIV).

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Sunday, December 2

# Righteous Revenge

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## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 12, 13

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My enemies are bad people. The worst, in fact. They've done some awful things to me, often, and with apparent and inappropriate glee.

My enemies make me angry, sometimes livid, even red-faced. They represent a wide range of wickedness, all unique and unknown at the time the heavenly stenographic pool transcribed the Scriptures. The Bible stubbornly refuses to take the bad-to-the-bone rottenness of my adversaries into practical account: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord'" (Rom. 12:19, RSV). Obviously written before Machiavelli.

So what's a hotblooded, vengeful mammal like me to do?

Not a moment too late verse 20 smiles sweetly and graciously offers up some typically unrealistic advice: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink" (RSV).

Thank you very much, good Pastor Paul. Now I'm hopelessly trapped between your sanctimonious sermon and the relent-

less insistency of my own anger, of my desire for righteous revenge. Give me a teacup of water, and I'm likely to grip by the nostrils and spoon-drown my unfortunate antagonist. And feeding an enemy anything I've prepared, as requested in verse 20, could only be construed as an act of vengeance, expressly forbidden in verse 19.

So where does that leave me? Angry, alone, red-faced, livid, martyred, abused, but discovering and digesting the second half of verse 20: "For by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head" (RSV). Finally, language I can identify with, active, cathartic, vengeful in a positive, scriptural sort of way.

That can be a life-altering change of focus, easy to talk about, difficult to implement. But the world's reservoirs of revenge could, if harnessed, represent enormous stores of positive energy ready to be channeled for righteous purposes. Imagine the possibilities, even for American foreign policy. "U.S. Fighters Drop Christian Tracts Near Khadafy's Tent," the headlines scream.

"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (verse 21, RSV). Typical of Paul to bury the lead.

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by Gary Tetz

Gary Tetz is director of college relations at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Monday, December 3

# Clothes Make the Man (or Woman)

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## LOGOS Rom. 12, 13

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The apostle Paul suggesting behaviorism? What is this anyway? Surely with all the notice given to the book of Romans during the Reformation, we would not expect to see behavioral lists in this theology of righteousness by faith. Yet here they are—how-to's on all manner of behavioral issues.

They instruct us to be kind, to feed our enemies, to pay our debts, and even to pay our taxes. A list—partial anyway—of the Ten Commandments follows. Do we take this to be a switch for Paul? Is he now opting for a behavioral form of righteousness? He says, "Let us behave decently" (Rom. 13:13, NIV). What does all this behaviorism have to do with righteousness by faith?

But before we get to that question, let's look at another. A quick reading of the first few verses of chapter 13 could bring us to some difficult positions. Are we ready to accept at uncritical face value the comment that God establishes all authorities and allows them to exist?

What about Herod, Pilate, Caesar, or others who have devastated God's people? What about Hitler? Was he God's anointed? Surely we must realize the untenable nature of such a broad application. Paul would not say

that. After all, he received in his own body the vicious results of leadership gone bad.

No, Paul was not one to sit by passively and allow injustice. Nor should we. It is curious to note, however, the camp we end up in when we do not concern ourselves with the environment in which we live. And a misguided concept of eschatology—the end of things—is largely at fault.

The danger of focusing on a horrific ending of the world is, first, that we feel pleased when things get bad. It's a kind of spiritual masochism. And when conditions start to improve in the world, we tend to become insecure, wondering whether the end is really coming, after all.

The second danger of this apocalyptic glee is that we experience a disincentive to address the needs and problems in the world. Why, after all, would we want to improve conditions around us when we base our assurance of the Second Coming on things' getting worse than they have ever been before?

It is a grim picture. And it places us in the midst of the camp of "consumptive eschatologists"—those without concern or care for the world, since it is all going to ruin anyway.

Paul's appeal is the opposite of this doom-and-gloom scenario. In fact, he refers to the coming of the end of things as the motiva-

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by Gary Patterson

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tion for these good deeds. We perform them, neither from fear of the results of misbehavior, though he makes this point in verse 3, nor as an attempt to gain favor with God or the authorities.

Rather, these noble behaviors are the result of something. The reason for keeping the commandments is love. The reason for righting social wrong is love. The reason for paying taxes (if we can wrap our mind around this one) is love. The reason for caring for the environment that God has given is love—and on and on.

“He who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law” (verse 8, NIV), Paul says. What does fulfilling the law mean in this context? It means we have kept it. We have done it. Paul does not countenance antinomianism here, even to the paying of taxes.

The application is clear. Unarguable. Fulfilling the law in love means keeping the Ten Commandments. It means living in harmony with our community. It means caring for the earth. It means making our environment a better place.

But what if everybody did that? Maybe the world would become so good that Jesus wouldn't

come back. Sounds pretty silly, doesn't it? At the outset, we know that isn't going to happen. The earth is wearing out like an old garment. And people are oppressing people on every hand.

Our mission is to do something about it. To be an island of love in a sea of indifference. To be a flower of hope in a desert of despair. To be a beacon of guidance in a night of lostness.

So, is Paul doing the behavior bit? Certainly! After all, that is the whole point of righteousness by faith. What good is faith if it does not result in righteousness? It would be a powerless sham. It would verify the charges of Lucifer that human beings cannot keep God's law of love.

Paul sums up the whole point in verse 14: “Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ” (NIV). His use of the metaphor of clothing is interesting. Clothing, after all, is something we put on the outside. Jesus used this imagery in the illustration of the wedding garment. The idea is not merely to cover something unacceptable underneath but to become someone different. Something new. Maybe it really is true that clothes make the man (or woman).

# Caring Enough to Confront

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## TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 13:8-10

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Skip this page. Go ahead. You really don't want to hear about it again. "Do not be conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2, NKJV).

This verse turns up many times in *Testimonies for the Church*. You know, those stories that make us squirm and wonder what Ellen White would say to us if she were still alive: "Sister B loves this world. She has not separated, in her affections, from the world, and given herself unreservedly to God, as He requires. He will not accept half a sacrifice. *All, all, all*, is God's, and we are required to render perfect service. Says Paul: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living [not dying] sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.'"<sup>1</sup> Poor Sister B. What a strong rebuke! And even worse, what can she do to satisfy the requirements?

Strangely, Mrs. White continues as if these requirements were some sort of joy. "What a privilege is thus allowed us, to prove for ourselves, experimentally, the mind of the Lord and

His will toward us. Praise His dear name for this precious gift!"<sup>2</sup>

Rejecting the world and making ourselves a sacrifice is a precious gift? Listen to the rest: "Sister B's grasp must be broken from this world before she can have a true, safe hold of the better world."<sup>3</sup>

OK. So we're feeling guilty. It's the same old question: How can we really reject the world when we're full-blooded human beings living in the middle of it? But notice that Romans 13 deals with politics, taxes, and all kinds of worldly stuff. And verse 10 gives the law: "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (RSV). The verse doesn't say to love our *Christian* neighbor, just to love our neighbor. Is this rejecting the world?

And Ellen White says, "The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man. 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.'"<sup>4</sup>

Does this change our reading of Romans 12:2? God doesn't say to lock ourselves away from the sinful world, but instead pleads with us to make a difference by being in it. We should not conform, but confront in love.

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1. *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 694.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. *The Great Controversy*, p. 467.

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by Cynthia Westerbeck Cawthra

Cynthia Cawthra is a senior English and music major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Wednesday, December 5

# The Great Escape

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## EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rom. 13:8

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"If we start feeding hungry people, things won't get worse, and if things don't get worse, Jesus won't come."

This epitomizes the philosophy of the "great escape." In view of the imminent return of Jesus to this planet, many say that social or political action is largely a waste of time.

After all, when a house is burning down, what is the point of vacuuming or rearranging the furniture? The escapist thinks the only thing we should really engage in is the rescue of the perishing.

How involved should the Christian be in social and political change? While treating symptoms, should the Christian tackle the causes of this world's injustices?

In the table below, John Stott helps us to see how acts of mercy should include strategies for justice.

Social and political action looks beyond persons to structures. It not only rehabilitates prison inmates but also reforms the prison system. This action not only ministers to the poor with acts of mercy, but also works to reform the economic and political system victimizing the poor.

Fellowshipping with each other in the church is more comfortable than getting our hands dirty in an apathetic and hostile environment. But if we take Paul's message in Romans seriously, our agenda will include both evangelism and social responsibility.

The "great escape" mentality is an excuse, not a solution, and it only continues to delay the Second Advent.

### Social Service

- Relief of human need
- Philanthropic activity
- Ministry to individuals and families
- Works of mercy

### Social Action

- Removal of causes of human need
- Political and economic activity
- Transformation of the structure of society
- Quest for justice

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\*John Stott, *Involvement: Being a Responsible Christian in a Non-Christian Society* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1985), p. 31.

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by Ed Boyatt

Ed Boyatt is associate director of the Department of Education for the North Pacific Union Conference.

# Transformers

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## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Rom. 12:2**

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I remember being introduced by my cousin Kurt to a Transformer, a robot that he transformed into a flashy race car with a couple of clicks. I understand that Transformers were quite the rage at the time. And that is what pops into my mind when I read Romans 12:2. Complete change. Utter transformation.

Romans 12 and 13 describe our actions when the Holy Spirit transforms us: "Do not think of yourself more highly than you should. . . . Whoever shares with others should do it generously; . . . whoever shows kindness to others should do it cheerfully. . . . Love one another" (12:3-11, TEV).

What does transformation really mean? How does it apply to the kind of man or woman I am right now? Keeping in mind that to transform means to go against present inclinations, I have a few suggestions for transformation in a college setting.

*1. Talk to the "class nerd."*

Make a friendly overture to the student who always has something inappropriate to say. Help him to feel that he fits in. In other words, "love one another warmly as Christian brothers" (verse 10, TEV).

*2. Keep up with your assignments.* Do the reading for the class that *doesn't* have quizzes;

write the book report so that you have time to proofread it before you turn it in. In other words, "work hard and do not be lazy" (verse 11, TEV).

*3. Consider privately giving an article of clothing that you don't use much to someone who really needs it.* Make sure it is something nice, something you wouldn't be ashamed to wear. In other words, "whoever shares with others should do it generously" (verse 8, TEV).

*4. Ask God to continue to bless the person who seems to have everything that money can buy and who continually lords it over you.* In other words, "ask God to bless those who persecute you—yes, ask him to bless, not to curse" (verse 14, TEV).

*5. Even though you may not be one of the student association officers who get the glory for the activities they direct, get involved in the little detail work that is important but not so obvious.* In other words, "do not be proud, but accept humble duties" (verse 16, TEV).

If this sounds like a tall order, remember that the Holy Spirit is the transformer. His work may take a bit more time than turning a robot into a race car does, but when you finally give up and let God run your life, these transformations will be some of the most thrilling, liberating things you can imagine. Give it a try!

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by Julie Scott

Julie Scott raises money for Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Friday, December 7

## Activating the Inactive

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### OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 13:12

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I walked into his living room and found him dreamily watching TV. I say "dreamily" because he was sleeping. He was lying on his stomach with his chin propped up on his hands, snoring into the TV screen, which was desperately trying to awaken him. My friend didn't have the energy for even a strenuous half hour of TV watching.

In general, Americans are lazy. Fewer than 8 percent of American adults exercise at least 20 minutes three or four days a week. If breathing weren't involuntary, some of us would suffocate. I'm afraid this love of inactivity has spilled over into the church.

In regard to social or political issues the SDA Church seems to hibernate. We're so wary of keeping church and state separate that our pastors often avoid speaking about the world in which we live. Today's society faces many complex issues—abortion, euthanasia, pornography, apartheid, and discrimination—yet our church shies away from discussing them.

The SDA Church is strong in its commitment to strengthen the inner life of its members. That's great! We need to be strong on the inside if we are to make a difference on the outside. Yet our spiritual strength needs to affect

the world around it.

Read Romans 12 and 13. In active language Paul promotes active Christianity. He calls us to offer ourselves as *living sacrifices*, to allow ourselves to be *transformed* in order to *do* God's will, to *hate* evil, to have *zeal*, to maintain *spiritual fervor*, to *share* with the needy, and to *do* what is right. How should the church be active?

1. *It can provide opportunities (forums, informal discussions, etc.) for its members to wrestle with socioreligious issues.*

2. *It can encourage its individual members to take an interest in their society and participate in its functions.*

3. *It can promote volunteering.* Can we help curb illiteracy? What else can we do for the homeless? How can we meet the needs of the orphan, the single parent, the poor person, the alcoholic? Shouldn't our love be visible in action as well as theology?

Why do we balk at tackling life's major issues and problems? Are we too afraid of dissension? Sometimes in our quest for unity we seem to avoid controversial subjects.

Romans 13 says it's time to *wake up* and put on the *armor of light*. Those are action words.

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\* Susan Hauser, *Oregonian*, Oct. 19, 1989, sec. B, p. 1.

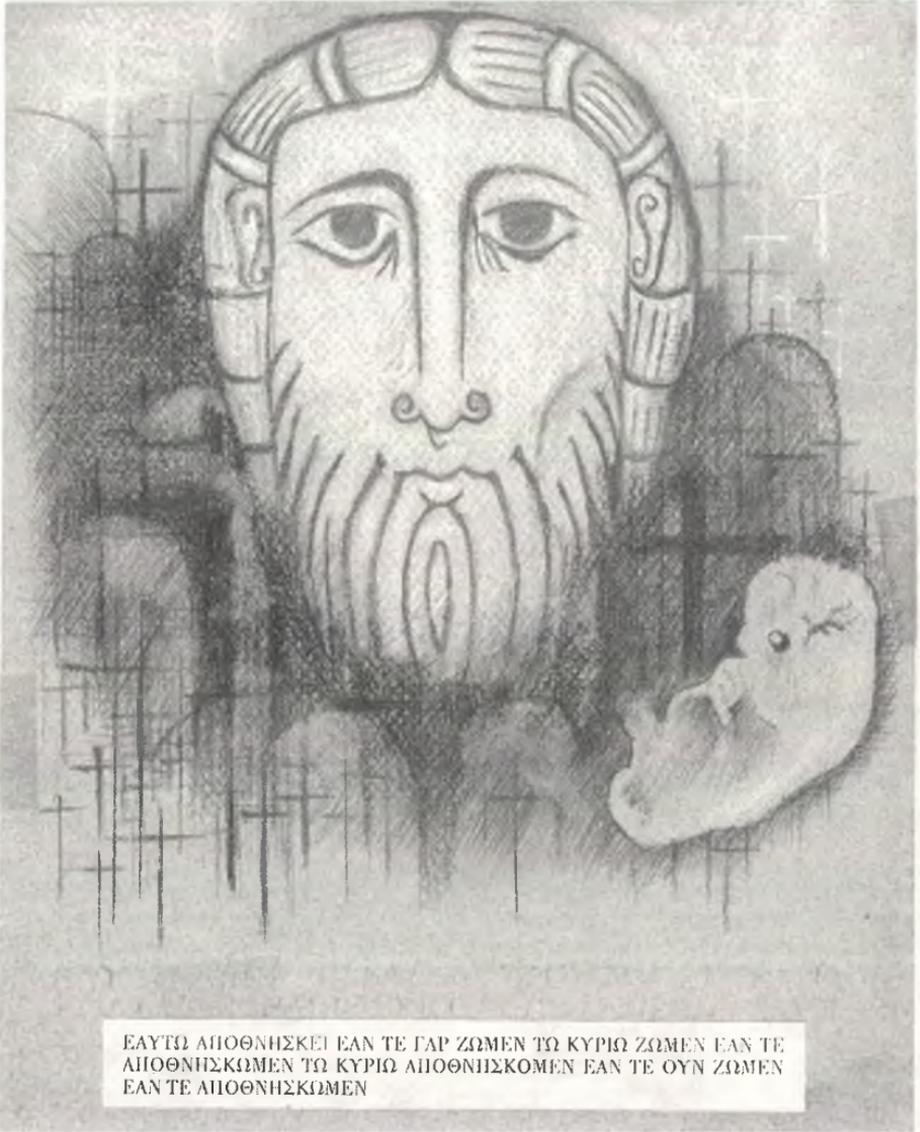
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by Mike Cook

Mike Cook teaches Bible at Portland Adventist Academy, Portland, Oregon.

Lesson 11, December 9 - 15

# Liberty on a Tightrope



ΕΑΥΤΩ ΑΠΟΘΗΣΚΕΙ ΕΑΝ ΤΕ ΓΑΡ ΖΩΜΕΝ ΤΩ ΚΥΡΙΩ ΖΩΜΕΝ ΕΑΝ ΤΕ  
ΑΠΟΘΗΣΚΩΜΕΝ ΤΩ ΚΥΡΙΩ ΑΠΟΘΗΣΚΟΜΕΝ ΕΑΝ ΤΕ ΟΥΝ ΖΩΜΕΝ  
ΕΑΝ ΤΕ ΑΠΟΘΗΣΚΩΜΕΝ

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**“If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord” (Rom. 14:8, NIV).**

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Sunday, December 9

# An Open Letter to Chuck and Linda

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## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 14

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To: Chuck Roast, Linda Loma  
Usaville Church Leaders

From: Elder A. Paul

I'm distressed. Something's wrong at your church. I hear that some church members are inactive, that financial support, the index of a church's health, has diminished, and that young people are leaving your ranks.

Christianity is powerful because the Creator has perfectly matched it to the human mind. The test of true Christianity is terrifyingly simple: If you follow true Christian principles, your church grows strong. If you do not, your church declines. Have you fallen into legalism? If so, then you've made ego-gratification your god, you've lost the Christ in Christianity, and you've led your church astray. You must immediately correct this problem.

First, learn to accept someone whose faith you consider weak, without passing judgment on peripheral matters. I speak of food here, but it's merely symbolic of a legalistic attitude. Chuck, because you're broad-minded, you eat everything—your diet is a celebration of the taste buds. You, Linda, are narrowly scrupulous, so you eat very plain food, consumed as fuel for the body, nothing more. Chuck, you must not look down on Linda, and Linda, you must

not condemn Chuck, for God has accepted him.

So stop passing judgment on each other. Instead, Chuck, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block in Linda's way. Don't judge her, and don't strut around proud of your broad-mindedness. If someone like Linda regards something as sinful, then for her it's sinful. If Linda is distressed because of what you eat, you're no longer acting in love. Stop waving those hamburgers in her face! Do not by your eating destroy Linda, for whom Christ died.

On the other hand, Chuck—Linda, are you listening?—do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. Linda, no more pious comments about Chuck's decaf coffee! For, Chuck and Linda, the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Stop arguing about diet, and start caring for those troubled kids in your church. You need to start by *listening* to them, but you'll never really be able to listen as long as you're busy preening your own "holy" egos by fuming about each other's shortcomings.

Try to do what leads to peace and mutual spiritual growth, and stop wasting your time and energy in silly legalistic disputes. Whatever you believe about these things, keep them between yourself and God. Both you and your church will be blessed.

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by Gary Wiss

Gary Wiss is professor of English at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

# Love and Disagreement in the Family of God

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## LOGOS

Rom. 14

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*Weak believer:* I believe that God has clear and unchanging standards of behavior, and it is important for all of us to live up to these standards. I am troubled when I see people who claim to love God doing worldly things. Some members eat meat, attend theaters, and wear jewelry. Some ride their bicycles on Sabbath, and others go swimming. I am distressed when I see people in our church who claim to love God going so openly against His will. How can these careless, worldly people call themselves Christians?

*Strong believer:* I have been a Christian for many years and have rejoiced in the freedom of the gospel. Over the years I have grown closer to God and have deepened my understanding of His nature and His will. I live every day in His presence and look forward to His second coming. I am concerned at the emphasis some people in the church place upon external points of behavior. Some people are so wrapped up in their minutiae that they don't understand the gospel at all. You would think, listening to them, that the gospel is food and drink and apparel and entertainment. How can these unthinking legalists call themselves Christians?

These two voices have been heard in the church since Paul's day. Both are Christians. Both are serving God from the heart. Both are concerned for the church. But they disagree on how a Christian should behave. How is it possible for these two believers to live together in Christian fellowship? That is the question Paul addresses in Romans 14.

### The Situation in Paul's Church

Let's look at the situation in Paul's church. It's a model for what has happened in the church ever since. No doubt the examples would change from age to age, maybe even from place to place, or from generation to generation. But for Paul's audience the issue was eating meat. The concern was not over health or nutrition, but rather over food offered to idols. For the longtime Christian, for whom the old pagan gods had no hold, the question was of little consequence. Food was food. If someone had chanted some magic words over it, that didn't affect the taste.

But for the new convert from paganism, for whom the rituals of offering had deep meaning, the case was different. Eating food offered to idols was like idolatry. They might try to convince themselves that the gods didn't really exist and that the ceremonies were meaningless, but still the

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by Beverly Beem

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pull of the old ways was strong.

That is the situation Paul describes. We have two groups of people in the church called the strong and the weak. The strong believers rejoice in the freedom of the gospel and know that service to God does not rest in the observance of a thousand rules designed to keep them from the possibility of committing a sin. The strong are far along in their service to God and know the difference between God's will and human regulations.

The weak believers are caught up in scrupulosity, and depend on their list of do's and don'ts to keep them from sin. They don't understand how other church members can be so careless. Don't they know they are on the road to idolatry! To the weak, these rules are a hedge against evil. And sometimes it is difficult for them to understand the difference between this hedge against evil and evil itself.

Is it possible for these two groups to live in peace? They must. They are both part of the family of God. And it is this family relationship that leads us to the solution to the problem.

### **To the Strong Believer**

Paul first addresses the strong believers. He admonishes them to welcome the ones weak in faith, not to argue with them or try to reform them, but to love them. The strong are not to despise the weak. They are not to look down on them in condescension because they are dependent on the crutches of arbitrary regulations. Neither are they to flaunt their freedoms in the face of those who might not understand their motives or who might be offended. A child is not to be despised because he is weaker than his elders. Rather, he is to be nourished and loved, and in time he will grow to be strong.

### **To the Weak Believer**

Paul also admonishes the weak believers. He advises them not to judge the strong, who know something about Christian liberty that they don't. The strong too are serving God with their heart, and it is not up to the weak to judge them or belabor them with the weak's ideas of right and wrong.

### **To Both Groups**

Neither group has the right to judge the other or categorize their fellow believers as "good Christians" or "bad Christians" based on their own ideas of what is proper. Both groups, Paul says, are acting in good conscience. Who are we to judge the motives of another? Those who eat do so for the glory of God; those who refrain do so for the glory of God. Who appointed us a judge between them? Both groups are responsible to God alone. Who are we to pass judgment on the servant of another?

Part of Paul's solution to this dilemma is acceptance. We accept others with different views, whether they be weaker or stronger. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Christ loved them and died for them, and this makes them of ultimate value. Most of all, we accept them because Christ accepts them, and He is their only judge.

Because what we do is done before God, we must act thoughtfully. "Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind," says Paul (verse 5, RSV). We are not to take lightly our decisions of lifestyle. We are required to think them through and be convinced of the rightness of our actions. Whatever we do, we do it for God.

The key principle here, in modern parlance, is "Mind your own business." Whether we are among the strong or the weak, God has not commissioned us to straighten

out anyone else. Minding our own business is a hard principle for those of us who see clearly God's will for us and everyone else. But this, says Paul, is the secret of peace in God's family. It demonstrates what Jesus meant when He said, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35, RSV).

The theme of Romans 14 is love. It is not the poetical exposition of love found in 1 Corinthians 13; rather, it is a practical application of love within the family of God. It is easy to love when everyone is lovable; harmony is a cinch when everyone agrees with us. Love comes to its test in a conflict of conscience—not between good and evil or truth and error, but between two good saints in the church who are both fully persuaded in their own mind that they are right.

Both groups are called to love. Paul directs us from the question of what is legal to what is loving. All of us live our lives before God and are judged only by Him. But we also live in a community of people whom God loves. The strong are not to offend the weak by putting stumbling blocks in their way. Neither are the weak to judge the strong and hit them over the head with their false scruples. Love teaches both groups how to live together in peace.

*If Paul were writing Romans 14 today, what examples would he use to make his point?*

*As you examine your own Christian experience, in what ways do you consider yourself to be a strong believer? In what ways a weak believer?*

*How can the church help its weak believers become strong?*

Tuesday, December 11

## Judge Not . . .

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### TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rom. 14

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"Remember that you are never on vantage ground when you are ruffled and when you carry the burden of setting right every soul who comes near you. If you yield to the temptation to criticize others, to point out their faults, to tear down what they are doing, you may be sure that you will fail to act your own part nobly and well."<sup>1</sup>

"No man, whatever his experience, whatever his position, is to feel that he accomplishes a wonderful work when he fashions and shapes the mind of any human being after his own mind and teaches him to voice the sentiments he may express."<sup>2</sup>

"There is many a brave soul sorely pressed by temptation, almost ready to faint in the conflict with self and with the powers of evil. Do not discourage such a one in his hard struggle. Cheer him with brave, hopeful words that shall urge him on his way. Thus the light of Christ may shine from you."<sup>3</sup>

"It is not always that we are brought in contact with social Christians, those who are amiable and mild. Many have not received a proper education; their characters are warped, they are hard and gnarled, and seem to be crooked in every way. While we help these to see and correct their defects, we must be careful not to become impatient and irritable."<sup>4</sup>

"It is always humiliating to

have one's errors pointed out.

None should make the experience more bitter by needless censure.

No one was ever reclaimed by reproach; but many have thus been repelled, and have been led to steel their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring, and hide a multitude of sins."<sup>5</sup>

"It is in the order of God that persons of varied temperament should associate together. When this is the case, each member of the household should sacredly regard the feelings and respect the rights of the others. By this means mutual consideration and forbearance will be cultivated, prejudices will be softened, and rough points of character smoothed. Harmony may be secured, and the blending of the varied temperaments may be a benefit to each. . . .

"Any negligence of acts of politeness and tender regard on the part of brother for brother, any neglect of kind, encouraging words in the family circle, parents with children and children with parents, confirms habits which make the character unchristlike. But if these little things are performed, they become great things. . . . They breathe a sweet perfume in the life which ascends to God as holy incense."<sup>6</sup>

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1. *My Life Today*, p. 335.

2. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, pp. 427, 428.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 576.

4. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 72.

5. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 166.

6. *The Adventist Home*, p. 427.

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by Sylvia Nosworthy

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# A Law: "Not Free Not to Love"

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## EVIDENCE

Key Text: Matt. 22:39

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Today "law" has a bad name. In our society it is a painful, potent club that frightens people into doing what they would never do if left to themselves.

That is not what "law" means in God's world, a fact clearly understood by Old Testament writers. The psalmist understood: "Oh, how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:97, RSV). Jesus reminded His audience that Moses understood; when He stated that the law meant "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:39, RSV), He was echoing Leviticus 19:18.

In Romans 14 Paul points out that both the strong and the weak Christian need to obey the law of love. The strong need to learn that walking in love means not hurting our brother, and the weak need to realize that the law of love, properly understood, points us to Christ, not our own efforts.

In his study of the lifestyle chapters of Romans, George Forell reemphasizes what Paul was trying to get across: "Only if we take the law seriously, namely, see it in the light of love, can it accomplish its most important task, to drive us to

Christ. When we dissolve the connection between law and love, the law becomes superficial and useless. . . . When we follow Paul and Luther connecting law and love, the law will make us better citizens and at the same time prepare the way for our realization that Jesus, the Christ, is our Lord and Savior."<sup>1</sup>

Obedying God's law of love does not make everyone think alike, but it does mean we will live for Christ and not for ourselves, according to a modern theologian: "If both the weak and the strong, those who abstain and those who do not, take their positions 'in Christ,' then grounds for the superiority of one group over another cannot exist."<sup>2</sup>

The strong are not superior to the weak; they are actually dangerous if they persuade their weaker brothers and sisters to violate their conscience. And it is a sin to cause someone else to sin. God's law says the strong and the weak must find unity in love. For Paul, even freedom has its limits: "One is free *to love*; one is not free *not to love*."<sup>3</sup>

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1. George Wolfgang Forell, *The Christian Lifestyle: Reflections on Romans 12-15* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 39.

2. Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr., *Adapted in Love: Contemporary Studies in Romans* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1977), p. 102.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

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by Terrie Dopp Aamodt

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Thursday, December 13

# Living the Joyful Life

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## HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 14:17

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The message of Romans 14 seems especially timely for Adventist young people today. In an age when church standards and traditional lifestyles are coming into question, Scripture provides a balance to voices that wish to discard the specifics of Adventist practice.

Is Sabbath observance important? Should total abstinence from drinking wine be revised to moderation? Are all meats actually clean, and, thus, should dietary restrictions be removed from our beliefs?

Lifestyle questions become significant for educated young adults who attend college, graduate, and set up their own family. When the influences of the non-Christian world press in, how well do the accepted Adventist practices hold up?

Romans 14 can appear both unsettling and reassuring in its answers to questioners of the Adventist faith. Three messages seem particularly strong.

1. *"Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind"* (verse 5, NIV). A primary goal of college is to teach people to think for themselves. Examining evidence, reading broadly, discussing openly—all are activities designed to help students settle into truth on a subject. God expects no less of our mind than college profes-

sors expect of students' performance.

2. *"Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters"* (verse 1, NIV). The unfortunate truth about being educated persons is that we are encouraged to pass judgment—on everything. We are taught to examine thoroughly, analyze minutely, dissect carefully, until there is little room for toleration or acceptance. Romans 14 urges us to let go of our judging ways when dealing with others, to stop focusing on the externals.

3. *"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification"* (verse 19, NIV). Although some may want to use Romans 14 as proof that specifics of lifestyle don't matter anymore, Paul's advice appears to be just the opposite. He reminds believers to be especially careful in what they do: "Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died" (verse 15, NIV). The stumbling-block argument increases our responsibility to be true to our convictions while demonstrating incredible acceptance and care toward others.

Romans 14 calls us to focus on important issues to personal and corporate belief, for "the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (verse 17, NIV).

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by Susan Gardner

Susan Gardner is associate professor of English and college writing coordinator at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

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## OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 14:17

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When I was a child, I felt strongly the call to witness for my faith. And I knew that I was supposed to witness to my “neighbors.” Now, my family’s neighbors raised pigs. Our neighbors were kind people who often fed my brothers and me wonderful, pork-free, farm meals. They helped us with our farming and frequently would visit us children in the evenings when our parents were at work. But they raised pigs and ate them, too; so I knew that at the end of time they would be goners.

I felt that I would probably be a goner as well, because I couldn’t get myself to tell them that they should get rid of those pigs. Pigs are unclean beasts—corrupt, foul, and smelly beasts—but I never got the courage to tell my neighbors this. For one thing, I couldn’t figure out what they could do with their pigs. What did one do with a pig once it was born? Selling it would spread the evil. Giving it to charity was like sending a food bomb to CARE. Turning all the living pigs into pets seemed far-fetched. So I had a little witnessing crisis.

At about that same time in my life I observed that my mother had a witnessing crisis of her own. This crisis made her a little

angry, and that’s something she wasn’t very often. Let me say first that we weren’t vegetarians. We raised cattle, chickens, turkeys, sheep, and goats, and all these animals chipped in to supplement our diet in some way. But I was sympathetic with, and perhaps a little in awe of, people who were more strict. To me, the people who used soya milk and carob had evolved further than I had toward sanctification.

That’s true. But my mother resented the muscular witness of some of our church members who insisted that only certain foods be served at town potlucks or at catered meals, or that the ingredients of all foods be known so that the presence of substances like lard or vinegar would not sully the lips of the pure.

My mom felt that the church members who grilled the townspeople about their recipes were really pushing it to call this witnessing. So she would often help herself to offending items and tell me this was her witness. “The kingdom of heaven,” she said, “is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Now I was a little confused at first, but less and less as time went on.

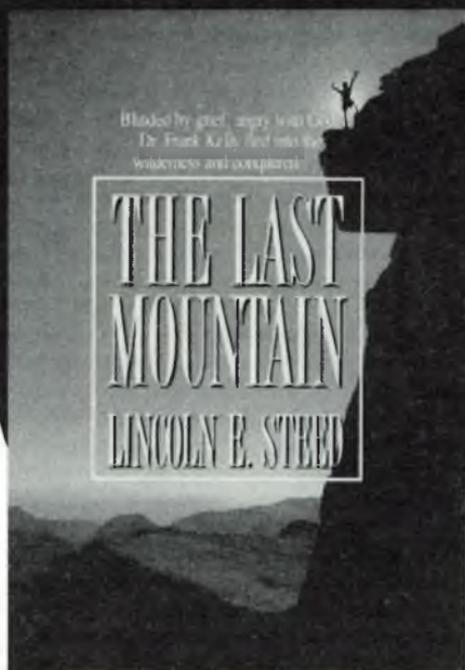
I see that people have different voices in their witness. But it does seem fair to ask whether the church can afford such divergent voices, or whether one witness for the kingdom should be strongest.

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by Dan Lamberton

Dan Lamberton is assistant professor of English at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

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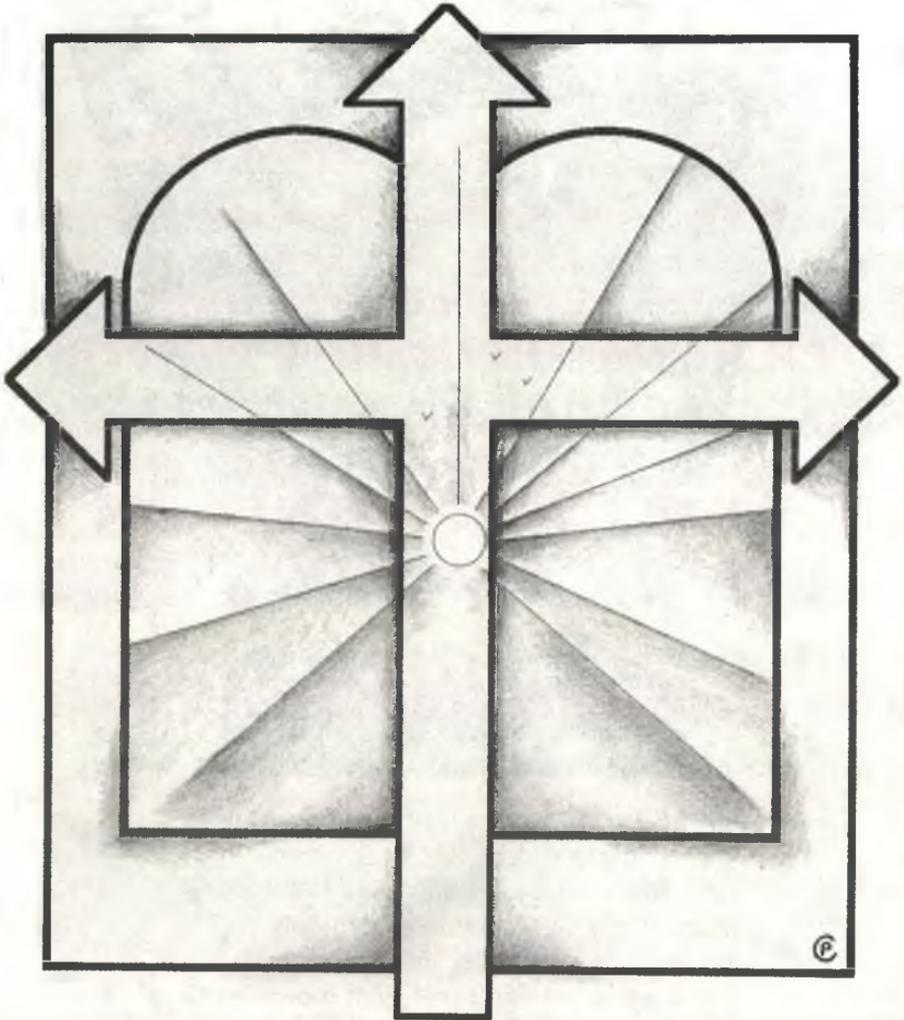
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# Talking About Walking



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“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13, NIV).

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Sunday, December 16

# Paul's Life Our Life?

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## INTRODUCTION

**Key Text: Rom. 15:13**

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He was frequently imprisoned and was flogged more severely than any of us, hopefully, will ever experience. Bandits, countrymen, Gentiles, and false brothers constantly brought him trouble. He did not always get enough food or sleep. And besides, he felt daily the pressure of his own concern for all the churches. Good old Paul! Always on the move, never giving himself time for rest and a well-deserved vacation. Head-shaking physicians at his time and now might have told him he wouldn't last long if he continued at such a pace. They would tell him there are limits as to how far we can go in helping people at our own expense. Nevertheless, in Romans 15 Paul cites his life as an illustration of the ideal Christian lifestyle!

Isn't it daring to point to one's own life, saying, "Look, this is good! Do as I do!" What makes Paul think he is better than anybody else? It would have surprised him to hear us ask him that. He would rather have said, "What makes me think I can live my life just for myself, caring only for my own needs?" A good question. Paul did not point to his own life to highlight good deeds. He presented Jesus as the accomplisher in his life.

Jesus says He will give us a spirit of unity. Sounds interesting, but is it possible? Romans 15

talks about accepting one another, instructing one another, proclaiming the gospel, and praying for one another. No way! That must be impossible. I cannot accept Anne's using her dreadful dress at every worship. And I know that the elder of the church wouldn't accept my instructing him! By the way, Christ would never tell me to do what I'm not able to do, would He?

When following a road, we always have the possibility of falling into the ditch on either side. Some people manage to stumble into both of them. Even though the road may seem perfectly straight, people still discover the ditches. Christ's and Paul's message to us may be clear, but we can still easily draw the wrong conclusions.

Verse 2 says we should do what is best for our neighbor. What is best for our neighbor—always to interfere in his business or to leave him entirely to his own decisions and choices? And what does it mean to accept one another, just as Christ accepted us (see verse 7)? Maybe it means joining all others calling themselves Christian, accepting their faith and glorifying God "with one heart and mouth" (verse 6, NIV)? Or does it mean that we should accept every fellow church member as he is, including all his faults? What did Christ accept?

What is a Christian lifestyle really like, according to Romans 15? This week we will, hopefully, find an answer to this question.

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by Berit Klausen

Berit Klausen is a third-year theology student at Newbold College, England.

# True Christian Behavior

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## LOGOS

Rom. 15

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In the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans the apostle Paul deals with an apparently unreserved display of liberal attitudes in the church at Rome. What some perceived to be their freedom in the gospel of Jesus Christ had, in fact, become an offense to fellow believers. The apostle desires them to understand that their liberty should be firmly rooted in Christian responsibility and mutual respect and, above all, connected to the sacred obligation of being a good example.

Romans 15 is evidence that Paul feels he has not said enough on this important point, and he pursues the matter further. He does so first by underlining the fact that Christians, by virtue of their calling, live with their eyes fixed on Christ and take on board as their regulator for daily living the promises and exhortations of Scripture (see verses 1-13). And second, by underlining the fact that Christians go about their daily duties under the guidance of the Spirit and to the joy of the Lord (see verses 14-33).

### **What Is True Christian Behavior? (read Rom. 15:1-6)**

*"We who are strong in the faith ought to help the weak to carry their burdens" (verse 1, TEV).*

Those who are strong in the faith sometimes have the assurance that their faith permits

them to do certain things. The text seems to imply that Paul includes himself in their number. While the "strong" have the inner freedom of movement, they are nevertheless under the obligation, not to please themselves, but to help carry the doubts and disabilities, embarrassments and qualms, of their fellow believers without the same inner freedom. The aim then is to meet halfway the thoughts and feelings of a fellow believer and to be considerate in the matter of conduct and opinion.

*What was the freedom of action that caused offense in the church at Rome?*

*What freedom of action causes offense in your own church and in your peer group?*

*Why is it not always appropriate to insist on your own point of view? How would you relate to "unbelievers" in this respect?*

Verse 3 contains the epistle's first reference to the example of Jesus. The statement "Christ did not please himself" sums up His earthly ministry and suffering. Oddly enough, Paul does not give examples from the life of Jesus; instead, he quotes from the Old Testament: "The insults which are hurled at you fall on me" (Ps. 69:9, TEV).

His use of this text shows how important it is for Christians to recognize that Jesus is the true meaning of the Old Testament and to know that His suffering is the key element in God's eternal

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by Erich Metzling

Erich Metzling is a lecturer in theology at Newbold College, England.

plan of salvation. All the reproaches leveled at God fall on Jesus. If for my sake He was willing to bear untold suffering, how shameful it is if I cannot bring myself to give up my freedom in such an unimportant matter as the exercise of my right in what I eat.

Verse 4 justifies his quotation. In view of what Christ has done, Paul admonishes Christians to open their hearts to one another as Christ has done for them.

### **Christ Is the Saviour of All (read Rom. 15:7-13)**

*"May God, the source of hope, fill you with all joy and peace by means of your faith in him, so that your hope will continue to grow by the power of the Holy Spirit" (verse 13, TEV).*

Paul begins here a discussion about the fact that Christ is the Saviour of both Jews and Gentiles. He does this by pointing out first that Jesus became a servant of the Jews for the sake of God's faithfulness to the promises made to the fathers. And second, that He became a minister to the Gentiles to demonstrate God's goodness, and that the Gentiles have come to glorify God for His mercy in calling them, as well. Paul does this by referring to Old Testament texts that foreshadow the mission to the Gentiles and their joy of salvation.

Compare verse 9 with Psalm 18:49; verse 10 with Deuteronomy 32:43; verse 11 with Psalm 117:1; and verse 12 with Isaiah 11:10.

*In what terms does Paul speak about Jews and Gentiles in the present context: (a) as believers and unbelievers; (b) as Jewish and Gentile Christians in the same church at Rome?*

*What difference does the distinction in (a) and (b) make, and what might be the implications? Who are the weak; who are the strong?*

*If (b) is valid, discuss modern parallels to Paul's "Jewish and Gentile Christians" in the context of your church.*

Consider the following. Paul's discussion of Jews and Gentiles has special significance in the present context. The inference is that unhappy divisions existed on the basis of the traditional backgrounds of Jewish and Gentile Christians. To the "weak" he points out the fallacy of claiming divine right where God has given none, and to the "strong" he notes the moral error of allowing their inner freedom to become a stumbling block to the weak. Both groups need guidance to the feet of Jesus, who came as their mutual Saviour. In verse 13, the key text for this section, Paul embraces both groups impartially and holds out the wonderful fullness of blessing in which their differences vanish into nothingness.

### **What Paul Has Tried to Accomplish (read Rom. 15:14-21)**

*"My brothers: I myself feel sure that you are full of goodness, that you have all knowledge, and that you are able to teach one another" (verse 14, TEV).*

Paul intends nothing that he has said previously to call in question the spiritual maturity of the Roman Christians. It seems to be an act of Christian courtesy for him to regard fellow believers as Christian unless he has valid reason to believe otherwise. Thus, persuaded of their genuine spirituality, he expects them to be honest and open with one another.

In this frame of mind he speaks of a certain boldness with which he reminded them of knowledge they already possessed. He does so because of the grace God gave him to minister to the Gentiles, so that God will accept them, too, and sanctify them through the Holy Spirit.

*Why does Paul emphasize his commission to the Gentiles as an act of God's grace?*

*What does servant-leadership mean for you?*

In this passage Paul speaks with attractive tenderness about the spiritual state of the Roman Christians. With a sense of gracious courtesy he justifies his corrective attitude as their counselor, and without a trace of spiritual pride or prevarication he speaks of his personal feelings and longings. Paul comes across here, and perhaps even more so in the next section, as a truly great man unafraid to show his feelings. His openness and transparent honesty put him in contact with others and keep him open to their sympathies however humble they may be.

**Paul Speaks of His Future Plans (read Rom. 15:22-33)**

*"I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love that the Spirit gives: join me in praying fervently to God for me. Pray that I may be kept safe from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to God's people there" (verses 30, 31, TEV).*

Paul displays here a fine courtesy of pastoral love and concern. For years he has hoped to visit the Roman Christians, whom he plans to meet on his intended journey to Spain. Whether he ever

goes there is uncertain and unimportant. Little does he know at this time that he will indeed see Rome, but not as he anticipates (two years of house arrest, during which time he meets with friends and writes many of his epistles).

Now, however, he plans to visit Jerusalem with gifts of material support from the Gentile churches in Greece for the poor Christians in Jerusalem (see Acts 11:27-30 [mention of an earlier collection]; 19:21; 24:17; and 1 Cor. 16:1-4). He anticipates fierce hostility from the unbelieving Jews, and now he puts his trust in the Roman believers to pray for him and with him, not halfheartedly, but earnestly.

*Why were the Greek churches under obligation to support the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem? What implications does this have?*

*May a pastor ask his congregation for personal encouragement and positive support in his work? How easy or difficult is it for you to express your weakness and ask for support?*

In this last section we see Paul as always—a loving pastor who cares for his people and desires to meet them. He is no enthusiast intoxicated with ambitious spiritual visions, but a mentally balanced man with a beautiful treasure in trust. He can show his strengths as well as his weaknesses and remain a great man.

Tuesday, December 18

# Apostolic Model

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## TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 John 3:18

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Love cannot long survive without expression. Like faith, love without good works can degenerate into a lifeless body of sentimental words. Paul, our apostolic model, identifies several aspects of Christian love in action. He urges the strong to bear the weakness of the weak and not to please themselves (see Rom. 15:1). He advises all to seek to please their neighbors and be of spiritual benefit to them (see verse 2), since Jesus did not please Himself (see verse 3). He asks Christians genuinely to accept one another as Christ has accepted them (see verse 7).

In the first three verses of Romans 15 Paul emphasizes the unselfishness of Christian love in action. In his life we see self-denying efforts to spread the gospel of love to those ignorant of it (see verse 20). Paul had desired to visit Rome for many years, but the nature of his ministry in the region between Jerusalem and Illyricum had prevented him (see verses 22, 23). His priority was to take the gospel of love to non-Christians. He did not seek to satisfy his desire to visit an already Christianized church in

Rome. His love for non-Christians overrode his own personal gratification.

Ellen White suggests that "unless we daily cultivate the precious plant of love, we are in danger of becoming narrow, unsympathetic, bigoted, and critical, esteeming ourselves righteous when we are far from being approved of God. Some are un courteous, abrupt, and harsh. They are like chestnut burs: they prick whenever touched. These do incalculable harm by misrepresenting our loving Saviour."

Two important principles we can learn from Paul's experience are (1) that Christian love is unselfish, and (2) that love always reaches out to those ignorant of it. How can we obtain such love? We can catch it by falling in love with Jesus, who so loved us that He dedicated His life to us. "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19, NIV).

## REACT

1. What are the characteristics of Christian love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8?

2. How does Christian love behave, and how does it differ from the popular view of love?

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*\*Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 605.*

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by Jerome Knight

Jerome Knight is a third-year theology student at Newbold College, England.

# Hypocritical Christianity

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## EVIDENCE

**Key Text:** Rom. 15:5, 6

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As Christmastime approaches, what will be most people's view of Christianity? While many may think of Mother Teresa, the Salvation Army, or even ADRA, many more will have other things in mind. They will think of white Christians who hate all blacks, or black Christians who hate all whites. They will think of TV evangelists, making millions while committing the sins they condemn. They will think of "Christians" in Lebanon, engaged in a war to the death with Muslims. They will think of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, bombing each other and justifying their actions from the gospel. They will think of church organizations in which some members refuse even to consider whether abortion is ever justifiable, while other members refuse even to consider whether an unborn baby is a human being.

Altogether too many people will perceive Christianity as a hypocritical and bitterly divided religion. And they will be right.

It is an age-old problem, perhaps, that has afflicted Christianity from the ascension of Christ until today. But in Romans 15 Paul offers us the solution: "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves . . . so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify . . . our Lord

Christ Jesus" (verses 5, 6, NIV).

Even by today's standards first-century Rome was a city. By the standards of the time it was huge. From all over Europe, North Africa, and Asia Minor people flocked to Rome. And the church in Rome reflected the city's cosmopolitan nature. In Romans Paul sends greetings to a long list of friends. We find among them believers from Greece, Palestine, Persia, and Asia Minor, as well as Italy.

But just as is true today, sharing a new faith was not enough to overcome differences. In chapter 14 we find that some believers condemned others for eating different foods, honoring or not honoring certain Jewish festival days, and, in fact, living differently. We similarly condemn those who live differently from us, or who belong to a different race, and hide our prejudices behind a cloak of piety.

But this is wrong. Paul knew that as long as we accept Jesus and His sacrifice for us, other considerations are less important. We should seek to build our neighbors up (see 15:2), not tear them down. And we know from the parable of the good Samaritan that *all* people are our neighbors.

While we must follow certain immutable principles if we are to live a truly Christian life, Christ crucified should be our sole model. "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (verse 7, NIV). This is the message of Romans 15.

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by David Trim

David Trim is a second-year history student from Australia studying at Newbold College, England.

Thursday, December 20

# Bearing the Burdens of the Weak

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## HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 15:13

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Today our most valuable possessions are time, money, education, career, home, vacations, and relationships. However, if circumstances arise that challenge our use of these, we become uncomfortable. In the "fast lane" of life we have no time for others, we set aside our money for personal investments, we attain an education for personal success, we pursue a career for financial security, we fail to make our house "home," we save our vacation for our own enjoyment, and we confine our relationships to the few.

How then does a young Adventist accept the counsel of Paul in Romans 15:1? Adventists desire upward mobility. So should I then bear the burdens of my weaker brother? I am sorry, Paul, but I don't think that's for me. You see, I am a yuppie working at the exclusive London Stock Exchange, and I have been told I have great potential. I can't bear the burdens of the weak—I haven't got time. In this world we have to learn to survive and help ourselves.

Does Paul's counsel have any relevance for today? The answer appears to rest on Christ's example of selflessness, which is to become our motivation. Paul equates bearing the burdens of

the weak with not pleasing ourselves and with edifying our weak brothers and sisters. The poet John Donne noted that "no man is an island." Paul challenges the reader to realize his responsibility on a wider realm—his neighbor, as well as himself. The element of corporateness is strong, and this corporateness includes our possessions. Consequently, we have a duty to our brothers to look after their interests.

Corporateness also develops the body of believers (see verse 5), whose maturity leads to unity. This maturing of the believers mentally, emotionally, physically, socially, and spiritually is satisfying. Sin has damaged all humanity in these realms, but the body of believers can help in restoration. Paul reminds the believer that Jesus is his ultimate source of strength, yet he also receives nourishment as a part of the body of believers.

Finally, the chapter rests on the hope of Christ (see verse 13). He invites the God of hope into our life. Our possessions cannot satisfy and quell the disturbances within our mind. Yet God's hope is what our mind seeks. This hope should abound through the power of the Holy Ghost. Our hope should be, not a route for escapism, but a means of confronting problems and making decisions by the power of the Holy Ghost.

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by David Savalani

David Savalani is a postgraduate student studying for an M.A. in religion at Newbold College, England.

Friday, December 21

# How Strong Are Your Shoulders?

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## OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 15:1

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Contemporary Christianity is too often an individual experience in which the Christian "works out" his salvation in complete isolation, hidden from the view of his fellow Christians. While we cannot deny that the relationship between God and the believer is intensely personal, we must also realize that the church is a community, a community that comforts those who grieve and encourages those who despair, a community that lifts up its fallen and participates with Christ in restoring them to what He means them to be.

Paul makes exactly this point in Romans 15:1. We who are strong "ought to bear with the failings of the weak," he says, and not simply "please ourselves" (NIV). The relationship between fellow Christians is not that of the spectator, the distant and disinterested observer.

In the word *bear* Paul expresses a completely different reality. Instead of distance, there must be involvement. We must dirty our hands. We must wipe tears. Responsibility for weakness, for human failure, is not the domain of the fallen, but that of the community as a whole. We must carry, shoulder, and sustain our brothers and sisters. Their failure is our failure.

But how, in practical terms, does one "bear" another's weakness? After all, moral weakness is not a suitcase, not a tangible object to lift and carry. Essentially, bearing means talking to the discouraged, bringing their problems to God in prayer. It means holding the hand of a young man dying from AIDS. It means washing the cracked and dirty feet of a stranger. It means embracing the man or woman caught in adultery, and pointing him or her to the forgiveness and salvation of Christ. It means opening our arms in love to the sinner, rather than crossing them in judgment.

This reaction is vital because failure tends to isolate the fallen. They believe themselves cut off from God and the church. They feel shame and perhaps sense rejection. The church is responsible to break down these barriers. We must grasp hands whether or not they are extended to us.

The concept of the church as a community means toleration, shared responsibility, and, perhaps most important, involvement with one another. The falling away of just one of us diminishes the whole. We must, therefore, bear one another's burdens and failings. The Christian journey is not a lonely struggle. We are not left to fight our dragons in isolation. We have the supreme gift of Christ's victory and the support of the Christian community.

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by John Wilcox

John Wilcox is a third-year English and history major at Newbold College, England.

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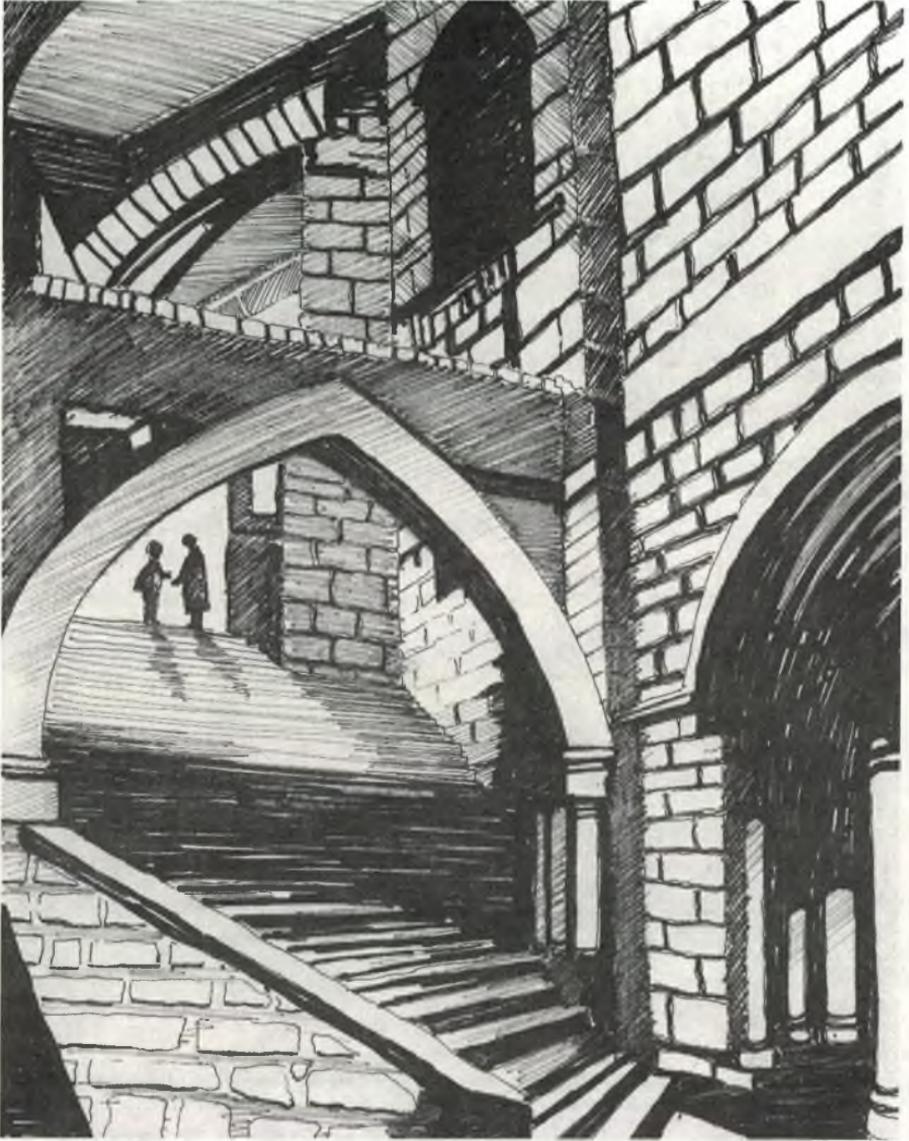
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Lesson 13, December 23 - 29

# You May Kiss the Bride



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“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them” (Rom. 16:17, NIV).

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Sunday, December 23

# Choosing for Life

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## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rom. 16:17

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It was his first time at an Adventist college, and Tim wondered how his concept of Adventism would compare to the other young people's on campus. The city in which he had been born and reared had lacked Adventist peers, and the awareness that he would soon meet 1,500 other college-age students of his own religion filled Tim with both delight and apprehension.

Before he had left home and started toward college, Tim had discussed with his father the pros and cons of attending a school filled with other Adventists. Tim's father had instructed him to be aware of fellow Adventists who might hold beliefs different from his own.

"Son," his father had said to him, "the influences you will face on your religious stand at college will be different from those you dealt with here at high school, where none of your friends held the same beliefs as you did. Your way here was straightforward, and although you had no support from friends of your own age and religion, you used the Bible as your guide and strove to do what you felt was right."

His father continued, "At col-

lege that will change. There you will encounter a spectrum of people, many claiming to be Christians, but adhering to such a variance of standards that you may become bewildered. But, son, I have faith in your ability to do the right thing. Keep in mind your struggles in high school to do what you felt was right, and although the way will not be easy, I trust that you will have the strength to maintain your standards and make friends who will help you to grow spiritually."

Friendships are important in determining a Christian lifestyle. Friends can imperceptibly alter our moral standards and religious positions. In Romans 16:17 Paul acknowledged this aspect of friendship when he warned the Christians in Rome about those within the church who had created dissension. Tim's father also addressed this aspect of friendship when he warned his son about the variety of beliefs he would encounter at an Adventist college.

Few people can claim to be independent of others. Friendships have enormous power to alter our lifestyle. It is important for us as Christians to follow Paul's advice in Romans. While not closing our minds to new and perhaps useful ideas, we should choose our friendships carefully and recognize their impact upon us.

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by Kevin Deane

Kevin Deane is a second-year history student at Newbold College, England.

## Partners in Salvation

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### LOGOS

Rom. 16:17

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#### Paul and Friends

*"I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church. . . . Give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me" (Rom. 16:1, 2, NIV).*

Paul wrote the book of Romans to explain the gospel to the churches in Rome he hoped to visit (see 15:22-24). At this stage the Christians met as a house church (see 16:5). How did Paul know so many people in a city he had never visited (he mentioned at least 26 by name)? Good roads and a postal system linked Rome to the rest of the empire. Since Christians traveled and wrote, Paul naturally knew of believers he had never met and friends who had traveled to Rome.

We cannot identify most of Paul's friends, though a few names occur elsewhere in the New Testament. Let's look at them. Paul apparently entrusted Phoebe, whose name means "radiant," with the letter to Rome. So much for his supposed low view of women. Then he named Priscilla before her husband. We have met them in Acts 18 and 19 and in 1 Corinthians 16.

We can almost see Paul's mind at work as he recalled the good work and friendship of this and that person. Paul emphasized the good points. He expressed confi-

dence. He was full of joy over the believers (see verse 19). He understood positive reinforcement. He sent personal greetings, not cold formalities. He wanted the members to enjoy good fellowship and to greet one another. In some cultures "a hearty handshake all around" (verse 16, Phillips) is probably a better translation than a "holy kiss."

*How was the first-century church a model for us in the twentieth century?*

#### How to Handle Temptation—Shun the Schismatics

*"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned" (Rom. 16:17, NIV).*

How should we react when someone comes along with a message that he claims is "new light" essential for the church? The first test is the congruence of the message to biblical teaching. Often the false teacher claims that he is restoring lost truth or bringing new. But does it build up or tear down the teachings of the church?

The second test is the effect of the message on the church. False teachers bring divisions and stumbling blocks (*skandalon*), from which we get "scandal." Read Galatians and Colossians for instances of wrong teachings' damaging the church.

The third test is the character of the teacher. The motive of the

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Hugh Dunton

Hugh Dunton works as librarian and teaches church history as well as marriage and family dynamics at Newbold College, England.

false teacher is self-interest. His method is smooth talk and flattery. He seeks the naive and gullible, claiming special light for special people.

What should members do with false teachers? Paul said to shun them, leave them alone, once we recognize them for what they are. This may seem hard, but Paul made it clear that these teachers serve their own interests, not Christ's or His people's. If we refuse to continue to listen, some will say that we have turned our back on truth. Some will ask us how we can sensibly condemn their message when we haven't taken enough time to listen. We should have something better to offer those attracted by false teachers. Whether they come with "liberal" doctrine, claiming to free us from old-fashioned standards, or whether they try to tie us up with some form of legalism, Paul said, "Shun them."

*Does showing love to all conflict with avoiding their evil? Can we be kind to false teachers while refuting their teaching?*

### **Prepare for Victory**

*"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Rom. 16:20, NIV).*

Knowledge grows exponentially, specialties subdivide, and disciplines find it harder to talk to each other. As educated people, we feel we have to keep up with what's going on in the world, so what did Paul mean by being "innocent about what is evil" (verse 19, NIV)? He did not endorse naïveté, for he said the naive are the very ones who get caught by false teachers. "In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults" (1 Cor. 14:20, NIV). Paul also said, "We are not unaware of his [Satan's] schemes" (2 Cor. 2:11, NIV).

Jesus "knew what was in man"

(John 2:25), but He did not share his wickedness. He knew what wickedness was (Nazareth had a reputation!), but it never entered into Him. Once we recognize a garbage can for what it is, we do not need to investigate its contents.

Paul echoed Genesis 3:15 in promising the downfall of evil and the victory of God's people.

*What will my priorities be if I am to be "wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil" (Rom. 16:19, NIV)?*

### **Thank God for Victory**

*"To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen" (Rom. 16:27, NIV).*

Paul ended the letter in a little hymn of praise to God. To get the sense of his long sentence, we need to jump from "now to him" to "be glory forever." The words between tell what God has done for us through Jesus, so that we too are led to give Him glory. Of course, God has wealth and power, but His true glory is His character. John said of Jesus, "We have seen his glory, . . . full of grace and truth" (John 1:14, NIV).

God is able to "establish" (Rom. 16:25, NIV), or to "strengthen" (RSV), us by the good news of Jesus Christ. That good news is not some afterthought on God's part, but a plan from the foundation of the world, now made clear through the prophecies fulfilled in Jesus.

We will see God's glory in people who demonstrate the love and power of God. Our salvation cost the life of Jesus; salvation calls us to put our life at God's disposal. Sacrifice? Yes, in the short term, but who really values a victory won without effort?

*How will our choice of lifework and lifestyle reflect our belief that Jesus is coming soon?*

# Guidelines for Choosing Friends

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## TESTIMONY

Key Text: 2 Cor. 6:14-17

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Recent statistics reveal that the average American changes his job 12 times in his working life. One consequence of these numerous changes is the opportunity to make new friends and colleagues. This places the Christian in a trying situation—whom to choose as a friend. Does the Christian have any guidelines for making friends? In today's lesson we shall consider some of Ellen White's advice regarding the formation of new friendships.

She said that when we form a friendship, we should exercise "great caution . . . lest an intimacy be contracted with one whose example it would not be safe to imitate; for the effect of such an intimacy is to lead away from God, from devotion, and [from] the love of the truth. *It is positively dangerous . . . to be intimate with friends who have not a religious experience.*"<sup>1</sup>

Similarly in 1906 she cautioned those forming friendships: "Many professed Christians think, like Solomon, that they may unite with the ungodly, because their influence over those who are in the wrong will be beneficial; but too often they themselves, entrapped and overcome, yield their sacred faith, sacrifice principle, and sepa-

rate themselves from God."<sup>2</sup>

Ellen White warned her readers: "In our institutions, where many are laboring together, the influence of association is very great. . . . And just in proportion to the strength of the friendship, will be the amount of influence which friends will exert over one another *for good or for evil*. All will have associates, and will influence and be influenced in their turn."<sup>3</sup>

"Do not yield your religious claims and privileges in order to gratify the wishes of your unconsecrated friends and relatives. You are called to take your position for the truth, even if it should be in direct opposition to those who are closely connected with you."<sup>4</sup>

However, although Ellen White cautioned us regarding our interaction with non-Christian friends, she also urged us to be a witness to them: "Personal, individual effort and interest for your friends and neighbors will accomplish more than can be estimated."<sup>5</sup>

"The very example and deportment as well as the words of the Christian should be such as to awaken in the sinner a desire to come to the Fountain of life."<sup>6</sup>

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1. *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 42. (Italics supplied.)

2. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 500.

3. *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 587. (Italics supplied.)

4. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

5. *Welfare Ministry*, p. 93.

6. *Messages to Young People*, p. 424.

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by Rick Slann

Rick Slann is studying for an M.A. degree in pastoral ministry at Newbold College, England.

Wednesday, December 26

# The True Friendship

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## EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rom. 16:17

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Leslie Weatherhead tells a story of two friends during a war. When one was injured and could not get back to the trenches, the other went out to get him against his commander's orders. He returned mortally wounded, and his friend, whom he had carried back, was dead.

The commander asserted, "It was not worth it."

The dying man responded, "But it was worth it, sir, because when I got to him he said, 'Jim, I knew you'd come.'"<sup>\*\*</sup>

This story illustrates friendship. The experience of any word is usually deeper than its definition. In our society the word *friend* sometimes confuses us more than it clarifies the nature of a relationship, because we make friends with animals, plants, trees, stars, and even rocks. No wonder we sometimes say humorously that "diamonds are a girl's best friend." However, we all know that friendship involves loyalty, caring, understanding, honesty, trust, and other positive virtues.

Romans 16 shows us Paul as a friend. We see his horizontal relationships with others and his vertical relationship with God. We see him, not as a cold scholar interested primarily in the professors of his time, but as a warm person who treasures and remembers every friend he makes. The

Epistle to the Romans itself, as well as the list of 26 names in this chapter, reminds us that we may preserve and strengthen our friendships through letters when we cannot be physically present with our friends.

In our key text Paul implies that we must be careful in our choice of associates. When we care for others, as Paul cared for his friends, we help one another to grow. However, if our friendships destroy our spiritual well-being, we need to uproot them, just as we pull weeds from our garden. Sometimes we have a need for wise, firm, and loving discipline in our relationships. This does not suggest that we should totally avoid dangerous society. However, we can avoid subjecting ourselves to evil influences without refusing help to those in need and distress.

Paul concludes the Epistle to the Romans with words of high praise to God. Jesus Christ, his best friend, is the subject of his life and the pearl of all friendship. And this same Jesus can be our friend today and forever.

Like the hero in Weatherhead's story, Jesus was mortally wounded for His friends. While he was dying on the cross, His words echoed: "It was worth it."

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<sup>\*\*</sup>Leslie Weatherhead, *Prescription for Anxiety* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956); quoted in Muriel James and Louis M. Savary, *The Heart of Friendship* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978), p. 1.

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by Branislav Mirllov

Branislav Mirllov is a graduate in theology from Newbold College, England.

# Choosing Our Friends

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## HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Rom. 16:17

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Romans 16 deals with the all-important theme of human relationships. As human beings we often find it hard to relate to one another as we should, for our differences in character and personality can lead to friction. The study of Romans 16 brings up three important points that we should bear in mind concerning human relationships.

1. *We need friends.* Paul's long list of greetings shows that many people were important to him as friends. We do not live in a vacuum; we all need friends to share our good and bad times. We should make a special effort to nurture those relationships that help us in our Christian life. Friends can make or break us, and we should choose them carefully.

2. *We do not have to be friends with everyone.* Often as a Christian we feel that we should like everyone. When we come across someone to whom we feel no special attraction, we feel guilty, especially if he is a Christian too. However, the very word *friend* means someone who is special to us.

As a Christian we should not be rude or unpleasant to anyone, but we need not go out of our way to nurture a special relationship

with every person. Christ taught us by His life to accept and love everyone, but even He had special friends like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus and His disciple John.

The apostle Paul advises us consciously to avoid anyone who tempts us to sin and who constitutes a threat to our relationship with God. We should not feel guilty about this. God has many ways to reach humanity, and we should not feel personally responsible for the salvation of everyone we meet.

3. *We should make God our most important friend.* Paul ends the book of Romans as he begins it—by glorifying God. God should always be at the beginning and the end of everything we do. Friends are important. Indeed, God made us social beings and gave us the gift of friendship, but we should never let anything become more important to us than He is. We should nurture our friendship with Him daily. A time may come when all our friends forsake us, but God will still be there for us. We should rely most of all on Him.

## REACT

1. How should we relate to a desperately lonely person to whom no one (ourselves included) pays any special attention?

2. Should we completely cut off troublemakers in the church in order to preserve unity?

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by Elizabeth Ridley

Elizabeth Ridley teaches English as a foreign language at Newbold College, England.

Friday, December 28

## “Blest Be the Tie That Binds”

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### OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 16

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Mark Twain supposedly once questioned why all the Christians he knew wanted to go to heaven, since they couldn't get along with their fellow Christians down here on earth. Though the great American satirist and novelist made his point humorously, it was nonetheless serious. If we think that our relationship to fellow Christians isn't important, we are sadly mistaken. In John 13:35 Jesus said that the one way others know that we are His disciples is our love and care for one another.

That Paul loved and cared for his friends and co-workers is evident in Romans 16. In this chapter Paul specifically greets twenty-eight different individuals. The fact that he had so many friends in a city he had never visited gives us an index to the kind of man he was. Christian people loved him dearly. The ones mentioned here undoubtedly lived in Rome, but had met Paul in some other place. Aquila and Priscilla had risked their lives for him (verses 3, 4), and the mother of a man named Rufus (verse 13) must have treated the apostle as if he were her son. The apostle greatly appreciated these friends, longed to speak to them per-

sonally, and could not refrain from sending them his cordial greetings. Throughout his entire ministry he actively mixed with people, showing them love, compassion, and tender regard.

“In today's busy world, the value of Christian fellowship is sometimes overlooked by God's people. This is indeed a spiritual tragedy. When believers share their problems and experiences, they are strengthened and uplifted. Many people in great pain or sorrow have testified that the kind words, the greetings and the prayers of fellow Christians were a pillar of strength in the time of crisis. Believers should cultivate fellowship with one another. It will add delight to the Christian experience in times when all goes well, and will be a means in God's hands to give strength and support in the hour of need.”\*

### REACT

1. From what you know of Paul, would you choose him as a close friend? As a pastor? Why?

2. What are the benefits of oneness that real Christian fellowship and caring in the church bring about?

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\*Richard W. De Haan, *The World on Trial: Studies in Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), pp. 188, 189.

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by Graham Bingham

Graham Bingham is editor of COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY.

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#### **Lesson 1: Prayer of Faith**

*Scripture:* 1 Sam. 1-3

*Theme:* How did the following individual relationships affect Israel's relationship with God: Hannah and Elkanah, Hannah and God, Hannah and Samuel, Eli and Samuel, Samuel and God, Samuel and his sons (see 1 Sam. 8:1-7)? How did Israel's relationship with God affect these individual relationships?

#### **Lesson 2: The Ark Taken and Returned**

*Scripture:* 1 Sam. 4-7:15

*Theme:* The Israelites undertook their campaign against the Philistines without consulting God through either the high priest or a prophet, thus showing that their relationship with God was lax at best. As their cause began to fail, they realized their error but continued to show total misunderstanding of their relationship with God. They treated the ark, and thus by implication God's law, as if it were magic and could save them. Neither was true, and they lost not only the battle but also the ark. The Philistines, obtaining their understanding of God from Israel, also misjudged God. The Israelites needed a Saviour, but their relationship with God was not repaired, and several years later they turned to man (the monarchy), not God.

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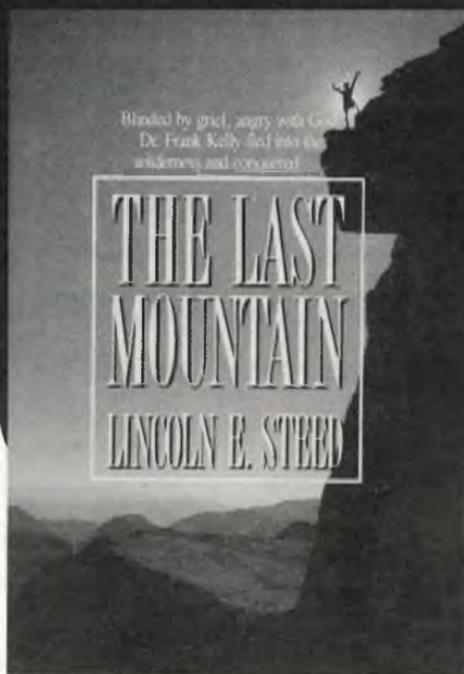
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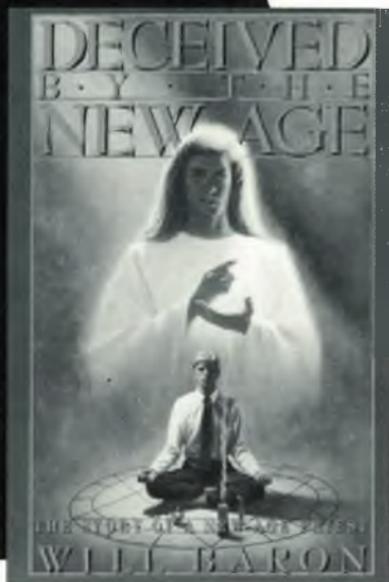
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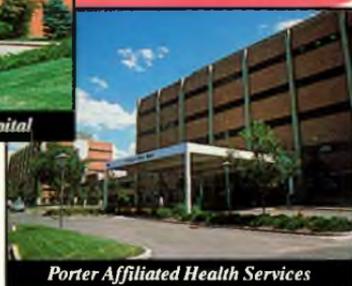
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