

A Bird's Eye View of Romans pt 2

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[0 : 00] Let's begin, as we always should, with prayer. Gracious Father, it is your word on which we are now to focus our attention.

We know that no adequate understanding of your word ever breaks surface except through the ministry of your Holy Spirit.

So we pray that the Spirit may be active in all our minds and hearts, so that the deep truth and wisdom and life-giving power of your word may come home to us in fullness as we study this morning.

Granted, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. In view of Bill's elegant remarks about the document that you have before you, and I hope you do all have it before you, I had 75 made.

Here is the 75th, but I hope that there aren't more than 74 of you here, so that everybody gets a copy.

[1 : 26] If not, well, I ask you to share. There's a spare one up here for anyone who's still short. But, you know, you pull a figure out of the air, and then it's either fairly accurate or not so accurate.

I guessed that there might be 70 odd people. When I say odd, I mean over 70. Let's get it right. I guess that there might be over 70 people here this morning, and I suspect that there actually are.

Okay. Well, I hope that every one of you does get a copy of the outline. It's called An Analysis of Romans. It's a document which I prepared years back when I used to teach Romans at Regent College.

Unlike some of the analytical charts that you get in commentaries and textbooks to summarize for you in diagram form the, how can I say, the ground covered by the printed paragraphs, this is a flow chart not all the charts that are made of biblical books are flow charts.

Some of them are simply analyses of the simple, basic sort that tells you, well, first he talks about this for so many verses, then he talks about that for so many verses, and this and that and the other following.

[3 : 17] appear as separate topics rather than as part of a single flow. But now, friends, if you and I write a serious letter on a serious subject, there'll be a number of paragraphs, yes, but there'll be a single flow, because that's how the human mind works.

you get clear, at least the wise get clear, as to what ground they want to cover, and what is the first thing to say, and what's the sequence in which to set out the rest of what one has to say until one's finished, and then the presentation becomes a continuous flow, and the purpose, the right purpose, it seems to me, of any analysis that is made ought to be to highlight the flow over and above the difference between the topic dealt with in one paragraph and in another.

And that's the kind of analysis that I offer you here. So, we're not going to go through this document, but if you take it into a quiet place and open your Bible and then look at the document, I think you will see that it's an attempt to pick up the flow, and though I, the author, am the one who says it, I felt satisfied at the end of the drafting that I had picked up and followed through on Paul's flow, so that the angle which is embodied in the document, the angle is basically one which Paul, if he'd seen it, would have nodded his head about rather than shaken his head about.

Well now, be that as it may, I present the analysis to you, and it's your privilege to do with it whatever you will.

You could, of course, use it to jam the door open or something like that. But you may find it helpful, I hope you will, it's given you with that hope in mind.

[5 : 48] Now, you know, or most of you know, I think, how this talk came to be. A few weeks ago, I thought I was going to be able to give you a bird's eye view of Romans from start to finish.

I was wrong. I couldn't get further than the end of chapter 8, and then the time had run out, and so I had to say, and Bill has accommodated me in this, we need a second session in the not-too-distant future when I can finish what I began.

And this is me, this morning, trying to do exactly that. But in order to make sure that we're getting the flow and our own wavelength, I must quickly remind you of one or two things that we laid down in presentation number one, where I started by saying that what I'm offering is certainly not an undermining or undercutting of the wisdom of Romans as the Church has discerned it over nearly 2,000 years of study.

I'm not correcting any of the basic perspectives that you and I have been taught in the Church by expositors.

we've always been told that Romans is Paul's classic full-scale exposition of the Gospel, his Gospel, God's Gospel, and indeed that's what Romans is.

[7 : 41] I think I told you then, and I certainly tell you now, Paul uses this word Gospel in a broad sense as far as he's concerned, everything that's involved in the new order of grace and mercy and new life that has become reality through the life, death, resurrection, and present heavenly reign of the Lord Jesus.

All of that is covered by the word Gospel. Sometimes, to be sure, Paul uses the word Gospel in a narrower sense, and I expect that when we use the word, most of the time we are using it in a narrower sense also.

We tend to stop short when we hear the word Gospel at thinking about personal salvation from judgment, from hell, from spiritual disaster.

and that's not wrong, of course, but that isn't everything that Paul means when he uses this word Gospel and declares right at the beginning of the letter that he is an apostle separated to the Gospel of God and when he tells the Romans that when finally he's able to visit them, he wants to preach the Gospel to them.

Paul, in those verses and in others also, is using the word Gospel in this broader sense and we, right at the outset of our own study, should remember that Paul has this broad sense attached to the word Gospel and it's the Gospel in the broad sense that we are surveying in Romans because Paul, as we rightly said to each other, and as the Church has been saying for 2,000 years, Paul is writing to introduce himself to a Church that he's never yet visited.

[9 : 52] He knows he's a controversial figure in that Church. There are converted Jews and there are converted Gentiles together in the Church.

They're having some difficulty in their fellowship with each other and it appears that they're having some difficulty also in their theology and Paul, the Apostle, wants to write a letter which will not only commend him to them in a perfectly clear way, I mean so that they know exactly what he stands for, but a letter which will bring them together showing how the things that they've been arguing about are to be synthesized, brought together, and understood as a coherent whole, coherent reality, in Christian faith, in the Church, in their day, yes, in their day, and in every generation.

So Paul, I believe, has done a great deal of preliminary thinking as to what he should put in this letter before he sets himself to dictate it to the man Tertius, who's mentioned actually in the very last chapter as the man who wrote the letter.

Tertius means that he took it down from Paul by dictation. That's the way that serious letters were ordinarily written in the first century.

There would be a scribe or an amanuensis, someone anyway who takes down the dictation, and the letter writer would first of all think out what he or she had to say and then dictate it.

[11 : 51] Well, we know how that works. it's a familiar enough pattern of, what shall I say, authorship, letter production, whatever, in the modern world.

And that's the pattern that's operating here. So when you think of Paul composing Romans, think of him, I think of him with hands locked behind his back most of the time, except when he finds himself waving them, and he's walking up and down, and he's dictating to Tertius, and he's planned out the letter, and he's making full use of his amazing power of compression.

This is one thing about Paul as a writer that isn't always highlighted. When he wants to, he can say a very great deal in a very few words, and he'll produce lists of words to illustrate a topic, as he does, for instance, in chapter 1.

He illustrates human sin in the world by a vice list, which, if you take it to heart, is calculated to rob you of sleep.

I mean, it is the human race in the large. And Paul reduces the behavior of the human race to a list of the vices that the human race shows day by day in our life together, and all our various relationships that through sin go wrong.

[13 : 33] Well, as I say, Paul can do that. You and I, I think, hardly could, but he could, and he did. And, well, Paul, as I say, he's an amazing fellow.

He's got it all sorted out in his own mind, and here he is dictating it, and you have the flow chart in front of you. I'm now trying to reestablish the wavelength on which our own study proceeds.

Yes, this is the kind of letter that it is. This is the immediate, short term purpose of the letter, that is, to bring unity and enlarge vision in the church at Rome, so prepare the way for Paul's visit.

He's expounding the gospel, first to last, in a Christ centered way, in a salvation centered way, in a forward-looking way, as he does look forward to the day of judgment, which is also a day of welcome for the Lord's people into the Lord's glory.

He's drawing out the ethics of the gospel, the way in which believers should behave. He's being analytical as he goes along so that no one will misunderstand the progress of thought, and he's being what I call doxological, that is, he is seeing his ministry, in this case, his dictation of the letter, just as he always sees the rest of his ministry, preaching, teaching, pastoring, and so on, as service of God, giving glory to God.

[15 : 36] And every now and then he breaks out into doxology, it's rather striking. Praise to God. Do you know the passages I mean? Well, goodness, let me just quote the doxology, which breaks surface at the end of chapter 11.

God's death of the riches of wisdom and knowledge of God, says Paul. How unsearchable are his judgments, how unscrutable his ways.

Who has known the mind of the Lord, who has been his counselor? Answer, of course, nobody. Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? Again, of course, the answer is nobody.

No. From him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Now, that's Paul's heart expressing itself in praise. Those verses don't carry the argument further. I suppose they crystallize the focus of the argument as it's been up to this point.

[16 : 45] But though Paul, as I say, is dictating a letter, and though, like anyone in those days, he is remembering that you don't want to waste words in a letter because having your scribe and the papyrus or vellum or whatever it is that the letter is being written on, that, of course, costs money.

Nonetheless, Paul can't keep the praise back. So every now and then it bursts out. And the praising temper, actually, is the temper of the whole letter, start to finish.

And we haven't really grasped its thrust unless we've appreciated that. Well, as I say, Paul's established his wavelength. He knows what he wants to say.

and we got through the first of the four big blocks, sorry, the first and second of the four big blocks of teaching, the four big stages, shall I say, of the flow of the letter as he dictates it.

From chapter one, verse eighteen, the very beginning of the argument, up to the end of chapter four, he's talking about what I called a relational reversal.

[18 : 16] That is to say, he's proclaiming and celebrating the way in which believers, who start, as everyone else starts, as sinners under God's judgment, guilty, yes, unable to save themselves, yes, lost in terms of what they are in themselves, yes, but justified, justly justified by God through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, the great reversal.

Justification, I think we said, is in essence a verdict. A verdict that however guilty in themselves these people may be, they are not penally liable, they are not to be punished, they are to see themselves as pardoned, forgiven, their sin is never going to be brought up against them, they are at peace with God, and so, how shall I say it, they can sleep quietly at night.

He doesn't say that, but that's the spirit of the flow of thought that begins with the declaration of our guilt and lostness and exposure to judgment judgment, and ends with a celebration of justification through faith.

That's chapters 118 through to the end of chapter 4. Then from chapter 5 through 8, this is the second big block of teaching following on from the first, Paul is talking about a personal transformation, transformation, a transformation of life in personal attitude, personal behavior, personal hope, personal endeavor, the whole reality actually of being a human being alive in the Lord.

world. That takes him through to the end of chapter 8. By chapter 8, as we all know, he is talking fairly expansively about life in the Holy Spirit, who indwells us through the gift of Christ, and by indwelling us, begins the process of transforming us.

[21 : 08] Prior to that, he is talked about the fact that we are in a completely new life, as compared with where we were before the justifying sentence was pronounced.

That new life is a life of peace, and joy, and hope, and assurance. All of that is in chapter 5.

And it's a new life in which we don't serve sin. We have a conscience which alerts us to the reality of sin and the temptations to which we are exposed on a regular basis.

And as new creatures in Christ, we are prompted, yes, by the Holy Spirit in dwelling us, already the Holy Spirit is appearing, through the Holy Spirit we are prompted to recognize and resist the temptations that come so that we don't serve sin anymore.

And that's chapter 6, of course. And then you get to chapter 7, where Paul sadly makes the point that even now we're Christians, reach exceeds grasp so that our purpose of full obedience to our Lord never quite gets fulfilled.

[22 : 49] There's a down drag of sin still in our system which keeps us from the perfection that we aim at. And that's very burdensome, he says.

Indeed, it comes out as a dramatic cry. Wretched man that I am, says Paul, at the end of chapter 7, who shall deliver me from this body of death.

He says body of death because sin has its headquarters in our physical system in some way which is spiritually real, although no form of human investigation can point to it and map it.

But it's just a spiritual fact. As long as we are in the body, so long, this anti-God drive, this anti-God thrust, which is sin, is sort of marauding in our system.

It's been displaced from dominion. It isn't ruling us, but it is dragging us back when we aim at perfection for the glory of our God.

[24 : 01] So Paul cries out, Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? And then immediately he answers his own question. I thank God, the verb to supply is, he will, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is part of the hope of glory, which is set before us all. that becomes his lead into Romans chapter 8, where he's talking largely about life in the spirit, which is life in this hope.

And so we get to the end of chapter 8, where he launches into what I might call pulpit rhetoric, in order to make perfectly certain that his readers are going to feel the force of what he said.

What should we say to these things? If God's for us, who can be against us? He spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all? Well, that guarantees that he will, with Christ, freely give us all things.

things. Does that mean all the good things that we can think of at the moment? No, it means all the good things that he can think of for all eternity.

[25 : 26] All things is a terrific phrase in that verse. How shall he not with him, with Jesus, also freely give us all things? Who will lay anything to the charge of God's elect?

God justifies. Who's going to condemn in face of that? Well, that's going back to the point that he was making so strongly in the first section of the teaching.

No, we have no condemnation to fear, not in any shape or form at all. Rather, we look forward in hope to enjoying the fullness of the love of Christ forever and forever.

Well, you know, Paul gets wound up and the rhetoric is exceedingly strong and you feel that Paul is not so much walking up and down in front of the guy to whom he's dictating his letter, but he's sort of skipping and dancing and making gestures which indicate how thrilled he is by this reality of the new life and the new hope.

Well, that's as far as we got. All right? I felt I had to say all that much to make quite sure that we were on wavelength and together for parts three and four of the letter, which continue from where part two leaves off.

[26 : 58] Chapters nine through eleven is a section of teaching which follows straight on from what's already been said. It's not a parenthesis.

It's not a treatment of something that has nothing to do with the main thrust of the letter. I have to say, sadly, a lot of Bible teachers have treated it that way in the past.

And I'm sure that you've heard it said. Chapters nine through eleven of Romans. Oh, a parenthesis on Jews and Gentiles. We lose nothing, we today, if we don't bother with those chapters.

So jump from the end of chapter eight to the beginning of chapter twelve. Well, the Packer word for an idea like that is a word that you've heard from his lips, I'm sure, many times.

Horse feathers. Baloney. What are you writing to a church where Jew and Gentile are finding it hard to treat each other as brothers?

[28 : 05] Told you that. And these chapters are intended to lay a foundation for proper, unitive, loving behaviour henceforth.

That's the job that they're doing. And if you want a heading for these three chapters, well, Paul confronts us now with a sovereign plan, explaining in detail what we're privileged to know about God's way with Jew and Gentile in relation to Christ.

How does the argument go? Well, I expect you know the chapters, and so I can be fairly brief on this, and already the clock is beginning to beat me, so I need to be brief on this.

Paul begins in chapter 9 by celebrating the mystery of God's sovereignty in what he calls, and so we must also call, election.

Nowhere in the Bible are we told why the God who made everybody doesn't save everybody, but it is a fact, and the Bible is very clear on that, that God selects from within the human race those whom he's going to save, those whom he's going to bless, those whom he's going to use to fulfil his purposes on earth, and Israel, the family of Abram was chosen for this purpose, and it was from Abram's family, out of Israel, that the incarnate Lord, the Son of God, become man, emerged.

[30 : 05] In other words, Jesus was a Jew, he wasn't anything else. The Nazis back in Germany in the 1930s spent a lot of time and energy trying to demonstrate that Jesus was a Gentile, really.

They had to do that, you see, as a corollary for their anti-Semitism, but they were completely wrong. Jesus was a Jew, and we honour God rather than dishonouring him by highlighting his Jewishness.

Well, chapter nine tells us God chose Israel, God brought his Son into the world as an Israelite, and what has happened?

Well, just as in the Old Testament, God's promise was fulfilled to those whom he had selected within the larger body.

So now, God in Christ, through Christ, promises salvation to all those who will trust Christ, and many don't, and so a large part of the Jewish community is on the outside, in unbelief.

[31 : 36] and this is a divine fact, says Paul. We can't change it. We should accept it.

We should look forward indeed, and this is chapter 11, we should look forward to the day when things will be different. There's going to be a big ingathering of Jewish folk before the Lord comes back.

But at the moment, says Paul, and he's writing, remember, about 60 AD, at the moment, most of Israel is saying no to Christ rather than yes.

And this is God fulfilling his purpose. Where scripture doesn't throw light, we would be wise not to ask questions.

And I say again, Paul is proclaiming this as matter of fact. He isn't encouraging us to ask why and to second-guess God and to think of ways in which God could have improved on the policy and the procedure and the planning of events to which he's actually committed himself.

[32 : 55] No. Face the fact, said Paul. I am writing to you Jewish and Gentile mixture in the church in Rome and I am saying we should begin by acknowledging that it's only a minority of Jewish folk who are putting faith in the Jewish Messiah and so qualifying to enjoy the fullness of the new life, new hope and the final glory that are promised by God to Christ's people.

What does Paul hope to do by rubbing people's nose in the fact of God's election like this? Well, he hopes on the one hand to acknowledge well, this isn't the way perhaps to express it, he hopes to enlist the Gentiles in the church in acknowledging that, yes, for the moment, we the church are a mainly Gentile community.

You Gentiles, you non-Jews are inclined to be snooty in your attitude to Jewish fellow believers because there are so few of them.

Well, remember, God is in charge of this whole situation and that attitude is not something that can be justified. Humble yourselves, Jew and Gentile believers both, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God who has in his providence brought the gospel to you, offered you Christ and drawn you to faith in Christ so that now you're living in the glory of the new life.

Humble yourselves, be thankful and honour God for his grace as it's been shown to you. Paul continues in chapter nine by showing that in the Old Testament Israel's unbelief is anticipated.

[35 : 23] Answers for I'm a Jew and this hurts me right at the beginning of the chapter. He said that I'm speaking the truth in Christ I'm not lying my conscience bears me witness on the Holy Spirit I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers if I could lay down my life for them so that they would all be saved I would they're my kinsmen according to the flesh and so on and so on well by those words Paul has sought to enlist the empathy of the Jewish Christians in the Roman Church he's saying to them in effect you and I I hope are together in seeing

Israel's unbelief and the fact that we Jewish Christians are such a minority within the nation we ought to see this as a tragedy a total tragedy and yes sometimes it would be good for us to lose sleep about it as we bewail this before the Lord see now we move on from chapter 9 into chapter 10 Paul taking both Jews and Gentile Christians with him in his argument as he at least he hopes and purposes chapter 10 opens with a repeat brothers my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God alas it isn't according to knowledge and it leads them to reject Christ and the gospel well all of chapter 10 is devoted to making the point that the gospel has come very clearly to

Jews right left and center Christ has been preached to them the way of salvation has been shown them and they have said no verse 21 the last verse of the chapter quotes the Old Testament God saying all day long I held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people so Paul is running these two lines of thought all of you Jews yes and Gentiles with you appreciate the tragedy of Israel's unbelief and all of you Jew and Gentile believers together celebrate the almighty grace of God that has brought you into the little flock of those who have a living faith in

Christ are experiencing the new life in Christ are living in the power of the spirit of Christ and are rejoicing in the hope that Christ gives to his people appreciate God's sovereignty in that and be humble and appreciate the tragedy of Israel's fall and be compassionate and now comes chapter 11 where Paul having as he hopes brought the Jewish and Gentile believers at Rome with him and so together with each other thus far reveals that God hasn't finished with Israel don't think that he has says Paul it's spelled out in some detail but the essential thought is very clear God has one people and has always had one people and only one people the

Jews Abram seed were the founder members and the original how can I say the original members of this people what has happened is that unbelievers though Jewish by descent though authentic seed of Abram they've been as it were broken off from the tree which is the picture of God's people the olive tree and what about you Gentiles who believe well you are like branches from a wild olive tree now grafted into God's olive tree God's tree remember is his people with present grace and future glory as their heritage as their heritage

[41 : 01] I believe that gardeners say this particular grafting process that Paul envisages could not work in the orchard well maybe it couldn't but you can see what Paul is saying as he develops his illustrations you Gentile believers who have heard the word of Christ which is addressed to the world and who responded to it by the grace of God you are now part of the tree you now live in the hope of glory you are on equal footing by God's grace with believing Israelites believing Jews like me none of us deserve it says Paul it's all sovereign grace let us be thankful then and not boast ourselves this is

Paul talking now to non-Jewish believers don't boast ourselves preen ourselves against the natural branches as if anti-Semitism the attitude that treats Jews as inferiors start to finish is part of God's purpose for godly life in the world it isn't no don't boast against the branches says Paul rather stay humble who are outsiders right at the end of the chapter

Paul says I understand my ministry as the apostle to the Gentiles although I'm as true blue an Israelite as I ever was I understand my god-given ministry as the apostle to the Gentiles as having this dimension along with other dimensions by ministering as I do and proclaiming the gospel as I do and attracting attention to myself as I do I am seeking to make my fellow Jews who at the moment don't believe jealous yes he uses the word jealous of those who have found new life in Christ the believing Gentiles yes and the majority and the minority of believing

Jews like me says Paul we have found something worth having and you are missing it he's seeking to make unbelieving Jews want it and rethink their unbelief just because they see that there are those who have it and their lives are being transformed and they themselves because of their rejection of Jesus don't have it and they're missing out and Paul right at the end of chapter 11 indicates that this in fact is God's way God's way in grace those who believe and are in the new life now they began by going through the experience the God given experience of being convinced of their sinfulness their lostness their hopelessness and then when they heard the gospel they realized this is something

I need and goodness when I think of my present position and the grim prospects attached to it this is something I want and so they embrace Christ and come into the new life well now says God sorry says Paul that's God's method and now he's going to apply it to Jewish unbelievers now in the providence of God they are going to see what non-Jewish believers have received in Christ they're going to contemplate the fact that there's a new life here a new joy a new glory a new hope and they are going to be made jealous so that they will turn to Christ in the end and so be restored to their historic place in

[46 : 34] God's people that is in God's olive tree which is the picture of his people and that's where chapter 11 ends up that's going to happen says Paul someday so there are at the end of the day there are going to be lots of non-Jewish believers and lots of Jewish believers too oh the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God how unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways I'm again reading verse 33 and on as I did right at the beginning who would have guessed that anything like this was going to happen who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid no no God's way is first of all to flatten everybody by forcing them to acknowledge their sin and lostness and then to raise up those who in humble repentance turn to

Christ in order to enter into the new life of grace and so says Paul famous last words if you like at the end chapter 11 from him and through him and to him are all things to him be glory amen join with me in praising God for the way that he's doing things that's the thrust of Romans 9 through 11 and it's intended as you can see to bring Jewish believers in Christ and Gentile believers non-Jewish believers in Christ like us I dare say all of us certainly most of us bring them together in a common attitude of wonder and praise and joy in the Lord well as I say that's what's going on there and then that leads straight into the final section of the letter chapters 12 through 15 where

Paul says pulling all the threads together now in effect he says I've unfolded to you all the purposes of God in the gospel this is what I shall be telling you more about when I visit you these are the themes on which I shall be preaching and teaching which I'll be encouraging you to celebrate with me as a demonstration of God's wisdom and his goodness and meantime let's honour God by being practical Christians who live in light of all this I appeal to you therefore brethren by the mercies of God which Paul has been expanding present your bodies that means your whole selves a living sacrifice holy acceptable to

God that is your spiritual worship that is what God calls you to do that is what God expects from you not argument and debate and coolness towards each other and how can I say it exploration of the thought I am better than you or else exploration of the problem which of us is on top in the purposes of God no get beyond that says Paul Jewish believers Gentile believers get together in praise and in service that's the way in which we show our appreciation of the gospel don't be conformed to this world then but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what's the will of God what's good and acceptable and perfect in every situation this is

Romans 12 1 through 2 as you know and then Paul goes to turn in this final section of his letter elaborating the corporate calling that's the heading I use for this section the Christian corporate calling to mutual service and mutual love in Christ service is celebrated in the rest of chapter 12 and there's what you might call an appendix to that chapter 13 be a good citizen honor God by behaving as the godly should in every political social domestic relationship and chapter 14 and 15 when there are differences of opinion among you differences of opinion for instance as to what may be eaten to the glory of

[52 : 10] God are there food rules or aren't there Jewish Christians obviously thought that the kosher rules ought to be carried over into Christianity and Gentile believers knew that that wasn't so and it looks as if they were sometimes at each other's throats about this chapter 14 seems to say that and chapter 14 begins with the admonition now get beyond all that my brothers and sisters as for the one who's weak in faith this is 14 verse 1 welcome him or her but not to quarrel over opinions alright one person believes he may eat anything while the weak person eats only vegetables let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats God has welcomed him

God has welcomed both sorts of believers who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another so on and so forth well this is part of the expression of the corporate expression of new life in Christ which Paul is sketching out in chapters 12 through 15 bear with the differences of opinion that Christians have on secondary matters and don't put stumbling blocks in each other's way don't make it hard that is for the person in your fellowship who on a secondary matter holds a different view from you don't make it hard for him to get along with you in your fellowship and that's where Paul finally ends up in chapter 15 where he celebrates if you look you pick up perhaps at verse 8 where he celebrates the fact that one of the things that

Jesus came to do in his saving ministry that's proclaimed in the gospel is to bring together human groups who previously had been separated and at each other's throats back again to Jews and Gentiles Jews and non-Jews I tell you says Paul this is verse 8 of chapter 15 that Christ became a servant to the circumcised Jews to show God's truthfulness in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs yes the gospel fulfilled all of that and Christ also came in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy as a number of Old Testament texts indicate and then that leads up to the end of the paragraph concluding sentence in verse 13 may the

God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing this is all of you everybody in the church nobody accepted may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing so that in the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope then he says rather significantly I myself am satisfied about you my brothers that you yourselves are full of goodness filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another Paul being kind in his affirmation but at some points I've written to you very boldly yes very boldly indeed on some points I've written to you very boldly by way of reminder because of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of

God so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable sanctified by the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus then I have reason to be proud of my work for God and so Paul goes on what he's doing is focusing as the final fact that he wants them to remember he as the apostle to the Gentiles has been admonishing all the non-Jewish believers in the church at Rome to love and serve their Jewish believing brethren just as he's admonishing the Jewish believers to accept all these non-Jewish Christians as being on the same footing as themselves and so Jew and Gentile accept each other in the Lord and Paul's purpose in writing this letter we hope is fulfilled and that is the end friends of my bird's eye view of

[57 : 48] Romans I'm not going to comment on the rest of what's in the letter that is Paul telling them that he hopes to visit them and then go on to Spain and Paul greeting all the people he knows at Rome and it's surprising actually when you consider that he's never visited Rome how many people at Rome there are whom he does know and whom he wants to greet in a personal way well he does it and then once again there's a doxology a magnificent doxology rounding off the whole letter right at the end of chapter 16 I will read it and that will be me rounding off what I've been seeking to share with you now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings that's the

Old Testament scripture through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations according to the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ Amen famous last word Amen Thanks for listening Well now we can discuss some of this for a few minutes I hope I've made Romans clear but this is open season and I think I may boldly encourage you to speak about what is the phrase we use anything about

Romans that you always wanted to know but were afraid to ask may be laid on the table right now thoughts reactions here I'm just wondering where faith is because I've spoken a lot about hope and love and I'm sure that all three are present but I noticed this week I was reading Romans 8 and he talks about faith or hope the way we offer Hebrews talks about faith so it just made me wonder well he has said very categorically and emphatically in the first block of teaching that justification is through faith in Jesus Christ faith with that in the promise of God faith with that in the goodness of God faith means trust trust means commitment

Paul's point is well it's highlighted by the fact that he keeps saying works won't do it justification new life is not by works but by faith in Jesus Christ what he means by that for sure is that we are to understand that though Jesus is no longer bodily present with us yet he's personally present through the Holy Spirit wherever the word of the gospel is proclaimed and whenever the promises of the gospel are extended it is as if the Lord Jesus himself extends them saying come to me all you who are heavy laden burdened distressed you who now know that you need this grace that I bring come to me and I will give you rest

I'll give you the joy of the new life and this is sorry living by faith in this way is assumed in sections 2 3 and 4 of the letter having been spelled out pretty thoroughly in the first section you see in chapters 3 and 4 Paul actually Paul reverts to a statement of the basic gospel in chapter 10 when he's explaining what it is that Israel has rejected the gospel has come to Israel and the gospel is a very clear word from God he says if you believe in your heart that Jesus Christ is Lord and you believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead you'll be saved there's no ambiguity about that but alas

[63 : 15] Israel doesn't have Israel in the mass hasn't done it yet doesn't do it today so that we have to live with only a majority of the world's Jewish people in the church I said it that way so that we can see that there's a contemporary force in what Paul says as well as a factual comment on how it was in 60 AD okay Paul's sense that Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit is for real and present wherever the word goes is something that permeates all his letters actually and to him the Lord Jesus is the living Lord present with him and he wants that same experience to be ours too so I'm with you always even to the end of the world said the

Lord well it's in that relationship that Christians have vision strength joy hope so the Lord is with us and we live in him two terrific pronouns there or prepositions I mean don't I with and in and this is the glory of the new life so I might lather on right at the back Jim remembering Dr.

Hill's talk to us a few weeks ago do you find in Romans any hint about what Paul knows the typical member of the church at Rome knows about the historical Jesus well right at the beginning of the letter as Paul is introducing himself he says what to him are the key things about the historical Jesus namely let me turn the passage up and read it to you yes I'm set apart for the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets concerning his son who was descended from David according to the flesh historical fact and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead Jesus

Christ our Lord those are the historical facts which Paul explicitly proclaims and requires that his fellow believers share with him but if you're thinking beyond that about the questions as to the detailed historicity of the Jesus of the gospels that Phil Hill was laying before us because they were being covered in the book that he was presenting to us well no that particular interest wasn't a first century interest that pervasive historical skepticism that we have to counter wasn't part of the what shall I call it the cultural milieu in any period of history there are only a certain number of questions which people in the mass or shall

I say the culture focuses on and the validity of the historical facts about Jesus which the apostles proclaimed wasn't the big deal the big deal was whether Jesus could possibly be the person that they said he was and the source of new life to us humans which they said he was and all the apologetic writings of the second and third century and there are quite a lot of them that have survived they're all focusing on that the question of Jesus divinity and mediation rather than on the question of the historicity of gospel accounts of his life or apostolic narratives of his life okay I thought

[68:12] I saw another hand over there yes I did so I wonder if you would comment on whether pharaoh had a chance and then more broadly are there some sinners who god's sovereignty is such that they don't have a chance at this point I'm going to query the phrase have a chance because even to use it and try to well allow yourself to think of it as if it's as if it's throwing light on the situation in which we are that phrase it seems to me treats us for the moment as if we were God able to think in those terms and gets us away from the reality of where we are in this world and where other people are in this world what I know you see about what we all of us may know about the about the gospel is it's two things one is that many of those to whom it comes refuse it as did most of the Jews in Paul's day well one shouldn't

I think use the language of having a chance when that's the situation they've been confronted with the truth they've had opportunity in that sense and they have deliberately wholeheartedly authentically what else should I be saying said no well that's their choice if you want to say it say that they had a chance and they refused it I'm not going to stop you but I don't like the use of the word chance in that connection but then the second thing we have to say and every Christian generation has had to say it from the very first we have to say it still there are a lot of people in this world to whom the gospel has not come and concerning them

I think we have to say we really don't know what God's purposes might be all we do know is that they like us before we became Christians were sinners deserving condemnation and final separation from God and if that turns out to be God's appointed destiny for all of them we shouldn't I think be surprised because already now this is Romans chapter 2 verse 4 it's a point made in passing but it's a very fundamental point in itself Paul is interrogating the imaginary unbelieving Jew who is looking down his nose at Gentiles and he says

I mean Paul says to this man do you presume on the riches of God's kindness and forbearance and patience to you that's the thought not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance and there are hints in scripture pretty broad hints that as God's kindness in providence touches everybody so some awareness of the fact that this is how God has arranged it and that the good things that have come to us then are God's gift to us some sense of that comes through and some sense of the need to repent repent I mean of one's self-centered and largely anti-God life comes through as well well

Paul's saying you know everybody who receives God's goodness and doesn't respond with repentance is to some extent sinning against knowledge and hardening his or her heart against a revelation of providential kindness that God has already made he doesn't stop to develop the point in detail but that's what he's saying and that's the most that we're given I think to guide us in our reflections on people to whom the gospel hasn't yet come meantime scripture does bear down on us very heavily by saying look do you care as you are telling us you care about the folk who have never heard the gospel well what are you doing to try and take the gospel or bring the gospel or send the gospel to them why aren't you practicing neighbor love towards them and trying to get the word of salvation into their minds we ask theoretical questions as a basis for argument do these folk have a chance or not and the bible comes roaring back with a practical imperative you care about these people then do something about them see and really all of us you know are still impacted by that word as the lord's people have ever been what are you doing then to try and bring the word to them in love as you should be doing

[74 : 46] I've hammered away at this rather hard because I think the bible hammers away at it rather hard and that's where the bible leaves us God in effect is saying I'm not asking you to debate whether these people have a chance or whether they don't I am asking you to consider what loving your neighbor means in relation to them so what are you going to do about it well you see the point I needn't hammer it any further anything any other matters for discussion Bill what's wrong with my belief system if I cringe at the word chosen when I hear it expressed in Christian company those claiming to be chosen how should I rethink that

I think that those who claim to be chosen are making it difficult for you Bill and we should advise them and advise each other not to be proud because we are aware that God in his grace in Christ has broken into our lives and made us new creatures and brought us the riches of his salvation what we who are aware of this and what others who are aware of it also should be doing is praising God for the greatness of his grace in the way that Paul does in Romans you can't be proud of being a sinner whom God has hauled out of hell let's put it that way that's what we all are I think you cringe because of the grating feelings that are created by people who seem to be saying in conceit

I know that I'm elect I sometimes wonder if you are that sort of thing you know election is not something to be proud of but something to be praised for and there the discussion the talk should stop I mean it should praise should be the termination of it we should be endlessly praising God for the sovereignty of his grace call it election yes the bible calls it that but we're not to be arguing about it we are to be praising for it you see in these different ways God sets limits to what his people should and shouldn't be doing and doxology giving glory to God in the appropriate way by obedience and by praise is really the boundary of just about everything in the

Christian life now Bill is standing and I know what that means and that remark of mine I think is a very good sign off line so let's finish here thank you any final notices Bill or anything of that sort remember to register in the trundle for the on the lap to hear the■■■■ even they can believe