

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of
October 2020

(added progressively after each Sunday)

(see following pages)

Romans 13

Living as Part of Society

Romans 13:14

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

As we come today to the second part of chapter 13 we remind ourselves that a substantial part of Romans, from verse 1 of chapter 12, onwards is the practical outcomes, in all aspects of Christian life, of offering ourselves as 'living sacrifices'. Our holy and pleasing to God, response to His mercy. Mercy that is so fully laid on our minds and consciences through the process of the previous 11 chapters. Through the realisation and understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The view of the world around us is becoming more and more humanist. Mankind first! Which sees its ultimate expression in: me first. God is irrelevant. There is no life than this one. No ultimate right and wrong: only what seems best for me at the moment.

Yet the Bible. God's revealed will. Says otherwise. And so should we! The Bible teaches about relationships, who and what we relate to: first and foremost with God – the relationship that was shattered by the 'fall' of Adam and restored to believers through the work and merit of Christ alone; then a humble and accurate assessment of ourselves; relating to others in the church; all Christians; even enemies; and most recently how we relate to the authorities that God has providentially provided for our good.

How are we to derive the full benefit of verses 8-14? Especially in the continuing context of our lives lived as living sacrifices?

At a superficial level we could treat what we read as pleasant, passing platitudes. Nice things to hear, smile at and then pass on. That humanist world around us (and if we are not on guard – within us) quite likes 'do to others what you would like them to do for you'. After all, doesn't the world expect to get more than they give? There's not much living sacrifice in that.

Paul is not just throwing in a *pot pourri* of nice sounding things that we can 'take or leave'. He's much more systematic and serious about our 'living sacrifice' than that!

Note how the items from 12:1 are connected. Each giving a lead to the next: for example:

- 12:17-21 connected to 13:1-7. ¹⁷ *Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all.* ¹⁸ *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.* ¹⁹ *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."* ²⁰ *To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."* ²¹ *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

The 'take home' moral of this passage is to overcome evil with good. But then straight after this (remember there were no chapters and verses in the original letter), we get – ¹ *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. ...*

He takes the command to 'overcome evil with good' into the context of our involvement in society. Christians are to overcome evil with good in society. Taking their lead from God who institutes civil government to curb evil and encourage good behaviour for people as a whole. Yet we see that God has more than this in store for the Christian. People as a whole are caused to curb evil and be good through fear of punishment and the hope of reward. But the Christian is to find their 'overcome of evil by doing good' in the way of love. Deeds of compassion and generosity. Love which is the outflow of the response to His mercy. His love! To which we can only respond with lives lived as a 'living sacrifice'. Lives lived in the full view of the world.

- 13:1-7 connected to 8-10. ... ⁷ *Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honour to whom honour is owed.*
In general he is saying "Give everyone what you owe." Specifically he is talking about taxes levied, to allow the function of civil order and safety. But he goes on: ⁸ *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.* ⁹ *For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet", and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."* ¹⁰ *Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

He now makes clear that the 'all' used in verse 7, is now extended to the whole body of our neighbours – all the citizens we live with. He is not only calling us to participate in the role of civil order – cooperating with the purpose of the God-ordained state, but in public and civil life in general. In our neighbourhoods, communities and cities. Christians are to become great doers of "good".

Jeremiah, provides a clear Biblical example and model: He calls the Jewish exiles in Babylon to overcome evil by seeking the prosperity of their city. Last week we read a passage from Daniel. Where three of his fellow senior dignitaries of the 'governing authorities' of the mega city of Babylon were featured. Together with Daniel they were devout followers of the true God. The incident recorded how they had to deal with a case of God's law superseding the delegated rule of governing authorities.

Yet how did such devout Jews get to be in such exalted positions in a pagan and (true) godless nation?

The exile to Babylon occurred in stages. Initially the selected exiles lived in isolation from the rest of the city. Their false prophets told them that the exile would

be finished soon. After all the substitute king was still in Jerusalem. But Jeremiah writing from Jerusalem wrote a strong letter to them. His inspired knowledge was that the exile while temporary would require a new generation to come before it ended. Seventy years in fact.

His 'word from God' recognised that there will be a judgement on the city. They should not close their eyes to its wickedness. But it was for God to repay. The Israelite's were to become involved with the city. Seek its peace (shalom) and prosperity. Which would be their prosperity also. They were not to compromise with pagan values, but nevertheless be gloriously positive in the city. They should build their own houses and settle down. Invest in the community. Marry and have sons and daughters, to increase in number not decrease. Keeping their own identity and faith.

Seeking the peace of the city. Its overall harmony and prosperity and to pray to the lord for it! Jeremiah, as Paul does, is telling believers to 'overcome evil with good' by bringing their love and faith to bear on the public good of the city in which they live.

This is the setting for Paul's similar directions in Romans 13:8-10.

Paul moves his thought of verse 7 – not letting our taxes or the honour we owe the authorities be unpaid – to include all our debts. But extends that to the ongoing debt God's people owe their society: the continuing debt to love one another. (verse 8)

He ties this love-debt to our duty to keep God's law because *the one who loves another has fulfilled the law*. All the moral laws are summed up in "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." In other words, God's law is God's guideline on how to love others, how to do good for those around us. Paul is associating the guide lines as the means of expression of love. They could be called not *guide* lines but *love* lines. (verse 9)

However he then turns his expression around and says that it also is the case that love is *fulfilling* the law. He defines love as scrupulously obeying God's law in one's relationship with one's neighbour. Love is really just following the law!

In doing this Paul is refusing to pit love and the law against each other. The obedient (to the law) thing is the loving thing and vice versa. If we seek to love others we will seek to obey God's commands.

The world however does not see it God's way. It is often expedient in the short term at least, for example, to break God's law in seeking to show loving concern: for example, to lie. When we consider that to tell the truth will be hurtful to someone we care about. But Paul is in effect warning that we should not think we are wiser than God in determining what will hurt or help someone. Usually when we consider the 'loving thing', what we actually mean is the 'comforting thing'. But only God knows what we and our neighbours need ultimately. He built our souls and hearts. He alone knows what we need.

The law therefore, is God's way of saying: You want to do your neighbour no harm? Well, here's how! Follow these guide-lines (love-lines), not your instincts or wisdom. Disobeying God's law is never simple disobedience and every sin is also an assault on God's wisdom and a failure of love. (verse 10)

In serving his 'City' the Christian must avoid two extremes, as Jeremiah pointed out. At first there is a temptation to live in a 'ghetto' of believers, holding non-Christian society at arms length and failing to love it by serving it and working for its good. However at the same time Jeremiah told the exiles to maintain their identity as God's people. Exiles such as Daniel served their city of Babylon very well and he was in many ways rewarded for it, but he did not cease living as God's obedient servant. We do not show love to our society by compromising on obeying God's standards, rather we love it by obeying God's commands. The Christian neither shuts himself off from society, nor conforms to it.

However to live in this way the Christian needs to understand the nature of this 'present time' or this 'evil age'. (verse 11) We need to know and remember that we are citizens of the state in this world that God has established over us and at the same time members of an eternal Kingdom which is breaking in.

What is the nature of the 'present time'? ¹² *The night is far gone; the day is at hand.* While misunderstood for centuries, this verse is not principally about a very imminent end! This could not have been the case for those in the early church or since. Although the truism is there: *For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.* (Especially if we take our death as the final step to glory.)

However the main point of verse 12 is that, however long God's time will be, the present time is passing. It is not permanent. It, like the earth and this 'evil age', will come to an end. Therefore we are not to cling to it. To value it above the full and true Kingdom that is being revealed to us from a spiritual dimension. [Paul, else where – in Colossians¹ – points out that the believer is spiritually already in heaven, but has to live bodily on earth and should seek, with the Spirit's help, to live a physical life on earth, that is consistent with the spiritual life in heaven.] Not surprisingly then – Paul does not contradict himself – here he comes to a similar conclusion.

In drawing our attention to the progress of our sanctification: ¹² *The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.* We will behave decently as in the daytime of our 'newness of life'. We imagine that the future day has dawned and we actually see Jesus, right before us. We ask ourselves how then would we behave? What would we then know to be really important? What is it that lasts forever? (verse 13)

Finally Paul changes the metaphor but essentially continues to say the same thing: As we live as heavenly citizens, but in this world, it is fitting that we clothe ourselves with

1 Colossians 3:1-3. ² *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.* ³ *Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.* ³ *For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

Christ. This metaphor has already been used before when we consider the imputation of Christ's perfect life as a cloak to cover us in God's sight. But here the metaphor uses the point that the sort of clothes we wear on a particular occasion constrain us to the appropriate behaviour. You're unlikely to feel comfortable playing tennis in a tuxedo!

We are supposed then to remember, who it is we are wearing. What He did for us. What He wants for us and what it cost Him.

Romans 6 has already drawn this bow: ¹*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?* ²*By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?* ³*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?* ⁴*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

[2283]

Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ that that Spirit will live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today. Amen

Galatians 3:1-14
Limited Atonement

Galatians 3:13a

¹³ *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us ...*

This message is about the Cross! If you're wrong about the Cross then you will be wrong about everything else. That's why this is a particularly important message.

Over a period of time and during brief interludes in our general progress through the letter of Paul to the Romans, we have paused to look carefully at a 5 point series, which we have chosen to call the Five Points of the (Biblical) Compass.

In this we are being careful to show what the Bible actually teaches and not what many say, hope and would like to be: true Christianity.

If you were to embark on a sea journey, in times gone by, you would have needed a clear compass to guide you. Now if you understand the five points of the Biblical compass you will steer faithfully through the Bible; understand it; and find all the parts will fit together.

Historically we find there is an easy way to remember the five points: using the mnemonic TULIP, where:

- T stands for Total Depravity (or Total Inability). Men and women, boys and girls, all like us, cannot save ourselves. Sin has got into every single part of us. All we have and are. We can't turn ourselves back to God.
- U stands for Unconditional Election. Not to do with anything in us, but because solely on God. For His own reasons which are known only in Him. God has chosen to save certain men and women, boys and girls. They can never save themselves. Nobody is ever able to take the initiative. But God is Gracious and God is Great! He has taken the initiative. Chosen certain men and women out of the ruined human race to be saved.

Those are the first two points of the Compass which we have traced through the Bible, several months ago. Now number 3:

- L, it's called Limited Atonement – some call it preferably, Particular² Redemption or even Definite Atonement³.

This describes the process by which the people who couldn't save themselves, God has chosen to save. They are the people for whom Jesus Christ died on the Cross. When He died on the Cross He didn't merely make salvation possible. He actually saved those particular men and women, boys and girls. He didn't die on the Cross to **permit**, such a thing as salvation. When He died on the Cross

² It is the context of this title and its meaning that we sometimes choose to distinguish between the originally, Biblically faithful Baptist Movement in England (which adopted a very similar Confession to that of the Westminster Confession of Faith, at a similar time to that of the Presbyterian Church in the 17th Century) as 'particular' Baptists. Stuart Olyott clearly accepts this position. Sadly the majority of those claiming Baptist beginnings, particularly in Western Australia do not. So are alternatively described as 'general' Baptists.

³ While the alternative titles lose the letter L of the mnemonic, they nevertheless provide a clearer guide to their significance.

He actually **accomplished** something: what was necessary to save those particular men; those particular women; and those particular young people.

Jesus Christ died on the Cross for His people!

This is the third point of our Compass. So specifically what we are talking about this morning is: the Purpose of Christ's Coming. Why did He come; why did He live; why did He die; and what did He do (achieve) when He died? Did He actually do anything?

If we understand this third point of the Compass our hearts will burn within us! And we shall say with new conviction: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ".

Our task this week and next is to see clearly three things:

- How the New Testament sees the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Then quote some specific Bible passages to support this.
- Recognise the concrete effects of this great truth.

How the New Testament sees the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When He died, the New Testament says, that He really took the place of other people. (He had no sin of himself to die for!) Jesus suffered for sins – the just, died for the sins of the unjust. (1 Peter 3:18)⁴ Here Peter is using the language of accomplishment. Christ didn't just make something possible. He actually took the place of other people. Question: Who were those other people, whose place He actually took?

We read elsewhere in the New Testament words like this: He is the propitiation for our sins⁵. Propitiation means this: God is angry with the sinner (that's each and every one of us in our 'natural' ('fallen') state – as a consequence we are in a State of sin and misery)! But the anger does not fall on some sinners, because the Lord Jesus Christ has taken that anger on Himself. The terrible anger which deserves to fall on certain people for their terrible sin (all sin is terrible in God's sight) has actually fallen on the Lord Jesus Christ. So that they are delivered and saved from the anger of God which they deserve. That's what propitiation means.

For whom, exactly, was Jesus Christ a propitiation? Who exactly has had the anger of God turned away from him or her? Who are those people? The New Testament always uses the language of accomplishment.

Then we read that Jesus Christ, at His death really reconciled people. We have a good idea of what 'reconciled' means ordinarily: you have a quarrel, you make it up and you're reconciled. The Bible doesn't use it like that. The Bible uses it like this: you've rebelled against God; you're far away from Him and He brings you back to Him. Similar but not exactly the same.

4 ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered died once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

5 1 John 4:10

We are told that when Jesus Christ died, (Romans 5:10)⁶ He actually reconciled people at that moment. Who exactly are the people who are brought back to God, when Jesus Christ died? The language of the New Testament is always the language of – accomplishment! Something actually happened. Something was done.

Then there is another word used: that is ‘redeemed’. Paul writes, that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. (Galatians 3:13)⁷ Notice the language used: When Jesus Christ was dying, says Paul, He actually redeemed us⁸. Actually redeemed certain people. He didn’t just make redemption possible. He didn’t just ‘open the door’. He actually **bought** people back. He bought them (not brought) them back by His blood! Who is the people who were actually bought at the Cross? Who exactly was Jesus Christ redeeming? Because once more the language is that of accomplishment.

[At this point Olyott gives a personal testimony]

“Friends, I don’t want you to think that I’ve always believed what I’m preaching to you tonight. I haven’t! Before I was a student I had read many of the Sermons of Spurgeon and I saw that he believed this, and I found it difficult to believe. But when I became a student, in the ‘old days’, I had to share a room with other students. I happen to share a room with two fellows who did believe this. I had bags under my eyes for months, as we talked about the Cross and what actually happened there. My belief had always been that, Jesus Christ came to make things possible. I’d never heard that He actually saved people there. That He actually accomplished something. That He actually did something. He actually redeemed certain people. He actually took the place of certain people. He actually propitiated God for certain people. But as I opened the Bible, I saw that the language is always the language of accomplishment!”

Do we understand the difference between accomplishment and potential? Potential language is where, something is being made possible. The ‘door has been opened’ to it. The language of accomplishment is when something has been actually done. The Bible always uses language like that.

Let’s now look at this topic through the words of three agents.

Mr Universalist. He’ll speak first. Then Mr Arminius. We’ll let him talk – but not for long!⁹ But between them both comes – the Word of God!

- Mr Universalist: “The language of the New Testament is always the language of accomplishment.” So far so good! “Certain people are actually saved at the

6 ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

7 ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

8 Who are the ‘us’, Paul is speaking to? At the beginning of Chapter 3 he makes it very plain. It is the foolish Galatians, who have been bewitched by the false teachers. People who ‘received the Spirit’ not ‘through observing the law’ – that is ‘by any human effort’. God has given them His Spirit and has worked miracles among them, because they believed what they heard – the Gospel. They are clearly elect Christians, who were in need of direction and admonishment. But Christians none the less. Woe to any who take verse 13 to mean ‘us’, is everyone in general!

9 Nor for long! Because he has already had much too much to say since the beginning of the 17th Century. It is a serious indictment on the fallen human nature of many people who hold sway in Christian Churches, that heresies come (even in the earliest of the Churches) and even though they are firmly and fully refuted through careful study of God’s Word (such as resulting in the Canons of Dort) only to continue to infect later generations with monotonous regularity.

Cross. Everybody was saved at the Cross!” At least he takes the language of the Bible seriously, because he recognises that it is the language of accomplishment. Something was done. But he says that it was done for everybody. But he is wrong because the Bible makes it perfectly clear, that not everybody will be saved. There is a heaven – thank God for that. But there is a hell! There is a narrow road that leads to life, while there is a wide road that leads to destruction. The Bible doesn’t teach anywhere that everybody will be saved. So we can’t believe Mr universalist.

- Mr Arminius: “What I say, is what I believe, most alleged Bible-believing people say: that Christ didn’t save anyone in particular on the Cross. What He did was He made salvation possible. Salvation wasn’t even possible until Christ came. But now it’s possible. The door was locked until Christ came, but now the door may be pushed open. If you wish to push it open! Christ didn’t actually save anybody there at the Cross. He just made it possible for them to be saved. What Christ did doesn’t become effective until you take a step. What Christ did doesn’t do anybody any good until you accept Christ.” Does this mean the Arminian believes that Christ could have died in vain? “Theoretically it is possible for the Lord Jesus Christ to have come and for nobody to be saved.” We can’t accept that because it doesn’t do justice to the language of Scripture. Because in the above all the words are about potential – results. Whereas the terms of Scriptural language are for actual results. Christ actually did something. He actually saved people He didn’t merely make them savable.
- So we come back to the Word of God. “Christ by His death actually, and wonderfully, saved a certain number of sinners. They were bound for hell! But the Father had chosen them in His loving kindness, before the world was made. The Father chose them in His loving kindness, gave them to the Son. Those are the persons He actually bought, ransomed redeemed and saved. The Son paid the debt for the elect. The Son shed His blood for the chosen. He actually took the place of a specific nameable, limited number of people. He satisfied God’s Justice for them. He was a sacrifice in their place and they, in Him, receive every blessing: even the blessing of faith! Which was bought for them at the Cross.”

Only God’s chosen benefit from Christ’s Cross. That’s the meaning of Limited Atonement. Perhaps better described as Particular Redemption: Christ redeems particular people.

So we’ve seen the terms in which the Bible speaks. Now with our Bibles in hand we turn to some particular passages. Having seen the terms – which are terms of accomplishment – we turn to see how very clearly the Bible teaches this truth.

Some, before we open our Bibles may say, “Of course you will believe in Particular Redemption since it is just a logical consequence of ‘unconditional election’”. And so, of course, it is. BUT this is not the reason we believe it. We believe because it is actually taught in black and white on the pages of Scripture.

Not just because it's logical, and by the way, we shall see later, that the logic goes even further: to ensure assurance. The Bible teaches it.

- Matthew 1:21. We read it again and again at Christmas time. Even unconverted people when they attend their 'annual' Carol Service. Here's the angel talking to the shepherds, talking about Mary. "... *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus*, (which means of course, Saviour – what a name for someone who might have lived and died and not saved anybody: according to Mr Arminius) *for he will save his people from their sins.*" Christ has a people and He has come to save that people from their sins. Who is that people?
- John 10:11. *Jesus said, I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.* Now look at verse 15: ¹⁵ *just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.* Jesus died for the sheep. Now to verse 26: Certain people never come to believe in Christ. Why don't they believe in Christ? ²⁶ *but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock.* They don't believe because they are not the sheep! Yet some people do believe: because they are Christ's sheep!

It's not whether you believe or not which decides if you are a sheep. It's whether you're the chosen sheep or not which decides that you will be led to believe. Jesus died particularly for the sheep – only!

- Acts 20:28. (Notice that we can go to many New Testament Books.) Here is the Apostle Paul talking to Church Elders at Ephesus: *Therefore take heed for yourself and all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood.* God the Son: what – who – did He purchase, with His own blood? He purchased the Church of God. And we know from other passages that the Church of God is the total number of those God has chosen – the elect – since the beginning of the world and unto its end.
- Romans 8:31. (verse 29, you may remember refers to God having predestined certain people, those He calls, justifies and glorifies) *What then shall we say to these things, if God be for us who can be against us. He who did not spare His own Son and delivered Him up for us all. How will He not, with Him, give us all things.*
"Ah," says someone, "doesn't it say, He delivered Him up for us **all**?"
Yes! But who is the 'all'? Verse 33: *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?*
- Finally for now. Romans 14:15 There can be lots of different words for Christians these days. The word 'Christian' is only found 3 times in the Bible. The most common name is a *saint* or a *brother*. But here is another found here and in 1 Corinthians. Here Paul is talking about: if I eat certain types of food, I might cause another Christian to stumble in his faith. ¹⁵ *For if your brother (there's a word for a Christian) is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom **Christ died**.* Here then is another word for Christian: *the one for whom **Christ died**.* Do you every use

that expression when you talk about a fellow Christian? The one for whom Christ died. It is the same use in 1 Corinthians 8:11.¹⁰

We began earlier this morning to bring to the forefront of our knowledge and understanding: How the New Testament sees the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. What was His purpose: to bring salvation to the people God has chosen, before time began. This has led us to examine closely the Bible in order to find what it actually teaches. Not what many say, hope and would like it to say. But True Christianity! Sadly rare in many popular and populous churches – as has always been the case.

We still have a few more passages to consider next week and then it will be our duty to carefully recognise and take to heart the concrete effects of this great truth.

[2572]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**

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¹⁰ ¹¹ *And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died.*

Matthew 11:25-30

Limited Atonement – Part 2

Matthew 11:30

³⁰ *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*”

We began last week to bring to the forefront of our knowledge and understanding: How the New Testament sees the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. What was His purpose?: to bring salvation to the people God has chosen, before time began. This has led us to examine closely the Bible in order to find what it actually teaches. Not what many say, hope and would like it to say. But True Christianity! Sadly rare in many popular and populous churches – as has always been the case.¹¹

We have a few passages to complete this section. Finally it will be our duty to carefully recognise and take to heart the concrete effects of this great truth.

- 2 Corinthians 5:14. (This verse is chosen because some people use it as an argument to oppose the teaching we are giving!) *For the love of Christ constrains us because we judge thus: for if one died for all ...* (Ah!, Says somebody, “Got you.”) But keep reading! We must always keep reading. *We judge thus: if one died for all, then all died.* Meaning that everyone for whom Jesus died, has died. *And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and rose again.* There are certain people who have died to the old life and they live for Christ. They’ve died to their previous life. They live for the Lord Jesus Christ. Those are the people for whom Christ died.
- Ephesians 5:25. *Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it. That He might sanctify and bless it by the washing by the water and the word. That He might present Himself a glorious Church.* Jesus Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.
- Hebrews 2:9 Here we read a paragraph, because this is one of those references that people take out of context and then attempt to misuse it. *We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.* (Yes! But who is the everyone? We MUST read on!) *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by Him are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. So that He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one. For which reason He is not ashamed to call **them** brethren: saying, I will declare your name to my brethren in the midst of the congregation, I will sing praise to you (and again) I will put my trust in **him**, (and again) here am I (note) and the chil-*

¹¹ 1 John 4:1a, 3b-6. ¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, ... ³... This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already. ⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

dren, whom God has given me.

The sons who come to glory; the brethren; the everyone are who? The children whom God has given me!

- 1 John 4:10. *In this is love. Not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* Love isn't to be measured by our love for God, but by His love for us. The measure of His love for us, who love God, is that Christ bore the anger which our sins deserve. You can't know if you're one for whom Christ died, unless right now you're someone who loves God. But you find your comfort not in this love for God, which is weak and poor, you find your comfort in God's love for you!

It's clear then to reject particular redemption is to reject the Bible, the very Word of God. "Yet", says someone, "What about this word 'world'? When we hear things like, behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the World?" But even such people don't really believe that literally everyone in the world has their sins taken away by the Lamb of God.

The word 'World' is used in a number of ways in the New Testament. Often it is used to mean every kind of person. So the taking away of the sin of the World means, not just sin of elect Jewish people; or elect Samaritan's sin; and even elect Gentile's sin. He takes away the sin of the elect from all classes and backgrounds. He's the only 'taker away of sins' that the world has!

When the Samaritan woman went and talked to the people in Samaria, about Christ, they said, "Now we believe, not because of what you've told us but because we ourselves have met Him, we believe He is the Christ, the Saviour of the World." Not just the Jew's Saviour but of the Samaritans also.

When you understand that, you also understand what it means when Paul says, ... *the propitiation not only of our sins, but of the whole world.* That is, the only propitiator of sin in the world – that the world has – is Jesus Christ. The only Saviour that is anywhere is Jesus Christ.

You don't believe that 'world' means every single person. At the first Christmas the decree was that the 'whole world' had to be taxed. That's why Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem. Did the whole people of the world have to be taxed? No! Only the people Luke *was speaking about* – those in the Roman dominated part of the world.

The Pharisees in a fit of temper, said, "The whole world has gone after Him!" But they hadn't gone after Him. They didn't mean 'every single person', just the **ones they were talking about** at that time.

Up until now, starting last week, we have seen the terms in which the New Testament speaks about the Cross. Its always about something having been accomplished. And we've seen how very clearly the Bible teaches this truth. Now we come to part 3:

- The concrete effects of this truth. Someone who holds a certain truth, but just has it in his possession. Plays with it and admires it, but doesn't let it affect them

seriously, hasn't really grasped it in the first place.

A truth, when it is properly understood, goes into the very life and fibre of the person. When we come to believe what God's Word teaches about the Cross.

When we come to believe in Particular Redemption. There are two particular, wonderful, extraordinary things that happen.

- Firstly you are overcome by a sense of the love of God. Under the Arminian system, you have to believe that Jesus Christ died for an anonymous group. No one in particular. Not you particularly! You still have to claim your share of what it is supposed He did potentially for everybody. He didn't from eternity die for you, just for an anonymous group.

When I come to understand the truth of Particular Redemption, I am overwhelmed that He has always purposed to die in my place. God loved me always, despite who I am and my ruinous sin. He died for my actual sin. He died actually for me. So it is given to you to be able to say, "The Son of God died for me! And gave Himself for me!" And I know this, because one of the things that He purchased for me, at the Cross, was my faith. I couldn't have faith unless He purchased it for me. The fact of having faith is proof that I am one of the 'purchased'.

The Son of God purchased me! Now you see and appreciate all those wonderful ascriptions that so many hymn writers, who owned this truth, put into their verses: *my redeemer's love for me*¹²; *Rejoice!* 122.

And so if God, so freely, gave this the 'greatest gift', the death of His one true Son, will He withhold any of the further promise of His love from me.

The wonderful truth is Particular Redemption. The person who believes it finds that he soon is asking the question that David asked in the Psalm.

¹² *What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me?*¹³ How shall I say, "Thank You". The answer is in the very Scripture we studied recently. Romans 12:1-2 ¹ *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* ² *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

The first thing then is that the person becomes a worshipping Christian. The Cross becomes personal: I know He loves me!

- The second thing that happens could come as a surprise to any who haven't seriously contemplated this truth before.

It is that you get on with evangelism! This is quite logical.

I love God, because He first loved me. What is the relevant sign of our love? Jesus said, "*If you love me, keep my commandments,*"

"Go to all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature! ..."

So the answer is clear. Presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice is to follow the commandment to evangelise. So it is that the person who is subdued by

¹² Verse 5 of "Highest heights or darkest deep";

¹³ Psalm 118 as used in our OT reading.

the wonder of Particular Redemption is 'moved' to evangelise. Not to 'fill' the Church. It doesn't really matter if the BRPC lasts for a little while or longer. Our task is to obey the Saviour. Who loved and bled for us. To please Him.

So we take the Gospel to others – Biblically. Not by saying to whoever we can, that Christ died for you, and you and you. The Apostles never did that. Nor should we. They said, "God loves sinners! You are a sinner. Come to God as the sinner you are. Forsake your sin and come to Jesus Christ who died for sinners. There's no other hope for sinners. Sinners need to be saved and they cannot save themselves. There is a Saviour!" We don't say to the world, "He can be a Saviour". We say, "He is the Saviour." We don't say, "He wants to be your Saviour." We say, "He is the Saviour of Sinners! Acknowledge you sin. Own up to the fact. Come to Him. Embrace Him. He is Freely offered to you in the Gospel."

It could be further stressed, that only someone who believes in Particular Redemption can offer the Bible freely. Poor Mr Arminius and his disciples today. They always have to add a further condition on and above the Gospel. Such a weighty condition that it drives people away from Christ in droves. What they can say is this: Christ didn't die for anyone in particular. You've got to claim your bit of what He potentially did for everybody. When asked: What must I do to be saved? Well you must believe that Jesus Christ died for you. This is the most common and likely response from the Arminian. But the problem with this answer is that it is asking for something that the person wouldn't know, or understand, let alone believe, until they were converted. Unless the Holy Spirit works on the physical call of hearing the Gospel, bringing about the 'change of the heart of stone', the 'new birth', and making this spiritual call effective to salvation, no one will – in fact cannot – acknowledge the work of Christ. Christ's death is a 'stumbling block' to Jew and Greek alike.

Believing that Christ died particularly for you and for me is Christian Assurance. Not part of saving faith: openly and obviously from the beginning. It follows the granting of faith in the maturing Christian and even then is not obligatory for all. (see WCF: 18)

Paul makes it clear as he teaches Particular Redemption that Jesus Christ died for sinners. While they were still sinners! We should not ask, "If he died for you ... or for you." But that He died for sinners, "Are you a sinner? Then come as the sinner you are."

And if you come at all it will be because Jesus Christ died for you. . Then immediately you'll be able to say, "God loved me and gave His Son for me." Because you wouldn't have come otherwise! Would you?

We don't offer any other condition. We just say, "Come as you are! Come today. Come because you are the sinner you are. You don't have to first improve to be acceptable. Hate what God hates and resolve to forsake it (repent). The Spirit that is in you and converted you, continues in you to

strengthen your resolve. You can't do it by yourself. This is why Jesus said His 'yoke' is light, because His Spirit helps you to want it and to carry it. Now!" That's the wonderful Gospel offer.

The pity of the universalist. He says that you don't have to be saved you're saved anyway. The Arminian leaves it all up to you!

But the person who believes in Particular Redemption says that there is grace and kindness in God. He does everything that's necessary. So Come.

We close by going to Matthew 11:25 and listen to the Saviour Himself, as Jesus talks to His Father, in front of others, then He talks to the people around Him. This is true Gospel preaching. It's from the lips of the Saviour Himself.

²⁵ At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children;

Jesus admits in His prayer that God is sovereign – He's Lord everywhere and He's hidden truths from certain people and revealed them to others. He believes in God's election! *²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.* God elects for reasons only known to Him, with nothing to do with the nature or merits of the people. *²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.*

You can't know God except through Christ, and you can't know God unless Christ reveals the Father to you. He's got to will it. So for your salvation you are completely in His hands. Did Jesus close there? No. He then gives the freest invitation of all: *²⁸ Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*

[2489]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**

Refer to full sermon by Stuart Olyott on web site

Romans 14:1-23

Christian Liberty

Romans 14:23b

²³... *For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.*

As we come to the concluding chapters of Paul's letter to the Christian house churches in Rome, we are in a position to appreciate the 'broad brush strokes' of his purpose. He is the Christ appointed missionary to the Gentiles. The Christians in Rome were not the result of his earlier missionary journeys. He had not had the opportunity to convert them through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So he pens this masterful text book of the nature and purpose of the Gospel in the way he might do it if he were meeting them face to face.

The letter is full of detail expressed with intellectual logic. Despite occasional digressions to anticipate counter arguments or potential misunderstandings, there is a logical progression throughout the first 15 chapters.

The Gospel is the 'good news' of God's marvellous answer to the problems of 'fallen' mankind. The good news of God's salvation for ruined sinners.

So to make it clear what we must be saved from, Paul systematically breaks down any pretence of self-worth and merit of everyone, through his first 7 chapters. Romans 3:23: ²³ *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ...*

But then the antidote to our mortal sickness: Chapter 8:1 ¹ *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* The answer is entirely with God: He comes to earth to bear the penalty and save us from ourselves. Fulfilling the Eternal Covenant, mutually designed and agreed by the God-head before time began. A Covenant that was being systematically revealed through the 'Law and the Prophets' of the Old Testament Scriptures; promised and entrusted to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel).

Paul feels the need to digress in Chapters 9 to 11, to answer the objection that the failure of the Nation of Israel, 'by and large' to accept the Gospel seems to negate the promise. Romans 9:6: ⁶ *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ...*

He clarifies the meaning of the Old Testament concept of a 'chosen people': not exclusively those of physical descent from Abraham (and more specifically Jacob – Israel) but also those who inherit the faith demonstrated by Abraham.

Yet this strikes even deeper! It is not man's choice at all. Not in the slightest. It is the choice of God. In this, as in all things, He is Sovereign! God's choice comes before belief by the individual. That portion (the majority?) of ethnic Israel that failed to believe was identically and preemptively those who were not chosen by God!

Is God unfair? “No”, says Paul. Legally all should perish. God’s antidote, the Gospel. The saving Person, life and sacrificial death of Christ. Is not part of God’s justice, if it were, none would be saved. God’s salvation is from His mercy. No one deserves to be saved. None can earn it. It is God’s unconditional gift of mercy – grace.

Then, surprisingly to many who apply limited human logic and understanding, Paul equally emphasises in Chapter 10 that while all things are part of God’s sovereignty, humans bear the responsibility of their own actions. The Jews were blinded by their fanaticism. In their zeal to earn their own salvation through their ‘good works’, their pride caused them to stumble. Paul has signalled this at the conclusion of Chapter 9:
³³ ***as it is written,***

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; ...”

But the stumbling of many of the Jews highlights the salvation of the elect, Jewish remnant together with elect Gentiles. Romans 10:20 ²⁰ ***Then Isaiah is so bold as to say,***

***“I have been found by those who did not seek me;
I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me.”***

And out of this comes his glorious hope of the principal Gospel promise: ¹² ***For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.*** ¹³ ***For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”***

Chapter 11 answers “What about Israel”, basically looking at the remnant – of which Paul claims to be his own situation. ¹ ***I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.*** ² ***God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.***

At Chapter 12, Paul returns to his main discourse. Having strongly presented God’s grace and mercy in the promise of the Gospel he turns to our response. ¹ ***I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*** ² ***Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.***

As this chapter (12) continues from our relationship with God: our living sacrifice. It conditions how we relate to ourselves: ³ ***For by the grace given to me I say to every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.***

How we relate to others in the Church, Christians in general, – even our enemies!

²¹ ***Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.***

By Chapter 13 our recipe for how to offer a ‘living sacrifice’ has extended to include how we relate to the authorities that God has providentially provided – by divine ordinance – to promote good and restrain evil. ¹ ***Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.***

And this is expanded to include our relationship with the world. ¹⁰ ***Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.***

Chapter 14 returns specifically to our relationship within the local church, with the basic principle of acceptance. Welcoming those Christian brothers and sisters with whom you have differing views on matters that are not clearly forbidden in the Scriptures. In this regard Paul – as he does in 1 Corinthians 8, although in a different context – identifies types of Christians as either ‘strong’¹⁴ or ‘weak’.

The problem with the Christians in Roman, was that friction between the members was occurring over ‘disputable’ matters. Attitudes and behaviours that are not forbidden! Christians have a tremendous freedom living as members of Christ’s Body – the Church. We may live as we please. As true believers, the Spirit of Christ lives in us, by which our spirit recognises this and we can thus be assured of being adopted sons of God and not slaves. So what we ‘please’ to do: is to honour God. God has clearly set out what enhances His glory, in the ‘Law and Prophets’. That is the full counsel of His inspired Word, the Bible. So this is how we are to live.

Christ died to set us free, and nobody can be permitted to infringe our liberty (Galatians 5:13)¹⁵. Nobody then can command us to do anything, except what God has already provided in Scripture.

But other Christians can and do potentially infringe our Christian liberty in other matters. Second-hand convictions, religious traditions and taboos (that find no place in God’s Word) are commonly the method used.¹⁶

This in principle is the meaning of Christian Liberty. But although we have a perfect desire to please God, we are still imperfect humans and so we still find it useful to have what this means in more detail:

We may live exactly as we please – PROVIDED:

1. We do not disobey Scripture. Some things are clearly commanded; others clearly forbidden. Though we are not saved by law-keeping, nevertheless right (in the ‘eyes’ of the God we seek to please) is still right, being saved does not change that. The whole Bible is necessary to determine what is right and therefore what is wrong for a Christian to do (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

¹⁴ Paul doesn’t actually label the ‘non weak’ as the ‘strong’ until Chapter 15. But the meaning is there in Chapter 14.

¹⁵ ¹³ *For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

¹⁶ Fellow believers may attempt of spread ‘disputable’ forms of behaviour amongst us. This is condemned in passages such as Mark 7:9-13; Romans 14:3-4 – in the eating of only vegetables; Colossians 2:20-23; Galatians 4:9-11; 4:31-5:1.

2. We do not disobey lawful authority. The State is to be obeyed, provided it does not violate divine law; and provided it keeps within its own province, and does not meddle in the family, the Church and my individual walk with God. (Romans 13:1-7)
3. We do nothing to hinder our own Christians lives. Some things are not wrong in themselves, but hinder my spiritual effectiveness, weaken my faith, dampen my zeal, reduce my power to resist temptation, and tend to enslave. These must be laid aside. (1 Corinthians 6:12; Hebrews 12:1)
4. We do nothing to hinder the spread of the Gospel.
 - Some Christians are weak, and we need to support and consider them (Romans 14:1, 15:1; 1 Corinthians 8:9,11). Such a person is easily tempted and falls. He is weak in faith (Romans 14:1); in knowledge (1 Corinthians 8:7); in conscience (1 Corinthians 8:12). He is unable to grasp the fact that we can enjoy ALL God's gifts without scruples.
 - We are not to despise him (Romans 14:3), or destroy him (1 Corinthians 8:11) – that is, cause him to fall spiritually (Romans 14:21,13), or cause him to go against his own conscience (Romans 14:14). Though we must sometimes hurt his feelings, and this should not cause us to be put off from trying: to instruct his conscience.
 - He, in turn, is not to pass judgement on us (Romans 14:3), and to consider that we are less sincere in following the Lord that he is (Romans 14:6). Let we and him consider Romans 14:9-12.
5. We do those things that build up Christ's Body. We are not only free individuals, but members of a body. We are to seek each other's benefit (Galatians 5:13; 1 Corinthians 19:23; Romans 13:10). We do not ask: "How can I enjoy it?", But: "How may I use it to build up the Lord's people?"
6. We do nothing to hinder the spread of the Gospel. We are free! But we are prepared to forgo our freedom, if doing so will serve the Gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:12,19; 10:33). We are not bound to observe a particular culture, but we may choose to observe it carefully, if doing so will serve the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:22).
7. We do everything to God's glory. (1 Corinthians 10:31) ³¹ *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.* This is what our freedom is for: As we exercise our liberty, we are to carry ourselves as men and women actively seeking to glorify our Father in heaven, If we are to do a certain thing, then we must be able to do it to His glory. It must be capable of being consecrated to Him!

[1857]

**Pray for God's grace, through the Spirit of Christ to live in us all, that we may live the new life made possible by the Spirit, for all the saints present today.
Amen**