

Record of Sermons delivered during the month of
September 2020

(added progressively after each Sunday)

(see following pages)

Romans 10:1-17

The Gospel: Nature of Faith and Preaching – Pt 2

Romans 10:17

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Winning this poor world for Christ: *He who wins souls is wise* (Proverbs 11:30 NKJV)

Last week we began this topic. We again described the Gospel. In three words: Saved ... everyone (all sorts, Jew & Gentile) ... calls. Romans 10:13. ¹³ *For “everyone who **calls** on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

We find that there is no difficulty in the Message. The difficulty is getting the message to those who need it. So we considered the Nature of faith, since this is the God granted gracious means to salvation. The sequence to achieve this is in verse 14: ¹⁴ *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*

Someone is sent to preach to another; the other hears (understands the message); believes in Him who is the subject of the message; and then is drawn to call on the name of the Lord of the message.

Now let's hear again the final argument from last week so that we can add to it now: Many things sound incredible, when we first hear them. So some people when the first hear the Gospel they dismiss it.¹ Unconverted people find many things in the Gospel incredible, but if they allow themselves to gain more information, they can come to believe, by the grace of God. They may progress: at first incredible - it might be true – it could be true – it probably is true – and the day will come when you say, “It is true! I’ve heard the Gospel and I believe it to be true.”

BUT if that's as far as you get you are still unconverted and you're still on the road to hell!² It said in verse 13, “everyone who **calls** on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Then in verse 14 ¹⁴ *How then will they **call** on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to **believe** in him of whom they have never **heard**?* It will not do to just hear (know and understand) and believe, those are only the preliminary steps which bring you to the point of faith. The real faith is when someone **calls** upon the Name of the Lord. He sinks his pride. He kills his self dependence and self trust and on the basis of what he knows and believes

1 Consider some children in a tropical climate. They are told that in parts of Europe children there can skate on rivers. Incredible! But should they come to know and believe that in some places it can get very cold and water freezes to solid ice. With this new knowledge and understanding they can begin to believe that what was incredible is true.

2 You're no further advanced than the devil: he knows and understands the details of the Gospel and he certainly knows that it is true!

he calls out to God to have mercy on him and to save him because of what Jesus Christ has done for sinners. That is the nature of faith!

We hope there are no Sandemanians³ here: Still influenced by a Scottish sect which began in the 18th Century and has ceased to exist as an organisation, are people who hold the view: “That the bare death of Jesus Christ without a thought or deed on the part of man, is sufficient to present the chief of sinners spotless before God”⁴. That is, if you know the Gospel and believe it to be true that is enough. Most people in Bible Based Churches know about the Gospel. Probable most of these believe, intellectually, it to be true. But in this you are no further than the devil. You haven’t got any further than him.

Salvation, being saved, is on the basis of what you know and believe, you **then** put yourself entirely in the hands of the Lord who saves. The only Lord who saves is the one who stood in the world and said, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. .*” (John 14:6)

So we have the wonder of the Gospel. Last week we examined the ‘Nature of Faith’. But the overall purpose of this topic is to stir us up for soul winning. So now we turn to the last part of our title: The Nature of ... Preaching.

Verses 14 & 15a: ¹⁴ *How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? **And how are they to hear without someone preaching?*** ¹⁵ *And how are they to preach unless they are sent?*

The place of Preaching:

- Somebody must make the truth known, to men and women, boys and girls. Now imagine a King, who has certain commands which his citizens must obey. And he has certain promises to make to those citizens.

God is the King of all the world! He has certain commands and He has certain promises. But how will those citizens know what those commands are and what the promises are? Unless a herald comes and tells them! It’s the word herald, which Paul uses here when he talks about preachers and preaching. Nature is enough to tell people that God exists, but it’s not enough to tell them how to be saved. Conscience is enough to tell people that God exists, but it’s not enough to tell them how to be saved. Angels know how men and women must be saved, but they’ve not been given the job of telling men and women how to be saved – that great message.

Humans have got to tell humans how to be saved. That’s preaching! It’s amazing to sit down sometimes and notice how men and women talk to each other, They can talk: politics; about Cabinet Ministers resigning (there were some in SA last month – 3 in fact); they can talk about the current health crisis – nothing

³ A religious sect founded in Scotland and exported to North America where it seemed to have shared ideas with the early independent churches that coined the name of Churches of Christ. The Sandemanians, as such, have since long since ceased to exist by that name but their ideas may have persisted in those Congregation based independent associations.

⁴ Found on the tombstone of Robert Sandeman, the principal agent in spreading the sect to England and North America. He was a consultant to the similarly independent congregation movement in USA which saw the early development of the Church of Christ movement. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glasite>

much else on TV at present; they can talk about the integrity and plausibility of the Government or a Prime Minister; about football; fashion; facebook; money. Yet the same people say they can't talk about Christ. This really is amazing ... and sad.

No great gifts are required, to talk about Christ. Every man and woman in the Church is capable of telling the truth. No great training is required to talk about Christ. Everyone of us is capable of talking to somebody else. No great intellect is required, because we are not people inventing a message. We are heralds and the message has been given to us. We only have to relay it.

We can all do something: Some preach sermons. All can engage in conversation. Most could record or copy CD's and give them away. (This whole series of Know Your Bible Recordings can be copied from the internet – copyright free. Doreen and I were introduced to this valuable resource by a couple older than us handing out CD's at Church in Fremantle.) Many can buy books. Anybody can obtain printed tracts and pass them on discretely and prayerfully to other people. Almost anybody can write emails (or even letters) or send videos and audio presentations to friends and family. Often you can invite a neighbour in. Surely there is always something we can do.

Yet millions are perishing all around us! The Hymn: From Greenland's Icy Mountains can give the impression that all the heathen are in India, Africa and Greenland. While the vast majority of men and women in Australia have never really heard the Gospel, not even once. They know how to spell Jesus, but they don't know who He is. They've heard the name Christ, but they don't understand the message of Christ. They see religion on the TV and they have some form of official Government religion sometime in their schools. But the vast majority of men and women have never heard the Gospel at all. They do not know what the Gospel teaches.

In the meantime there is falsehood all around us. The official face of religion on the media is nearly always false. It is false religion in the name of Christ. There are sects and cults all around us. The biggest being our major denominations! Yes! That's what they have become.

Recently I was the recipient of a random call from a person touting for the Jehovah Witnesses. Somewhat surprisingly she was very friendly and skilful in her delivery of her sect's message. She used Christian sounding phrases in a confident manner and frequently employed well know Bible phrases. She retained her composure and friendly attitude even in the face of deliberate and pointed denial of her conclusions drawn from her interpretations. She made few obvious deviations from an orthodox Christian doctrine. Yet she did reveal the fatal flaw of the motive: of self justifying works. But only subtly, not overtly obvious. She was very skilful and practised. Most people would have warmed to her as a fine sincere Christian young (as her voice seemed to suggest) lady. But they are not Christian at all. They are 'dangerous wolves in sheep's clothing'. She is even more dangerous than most!

We are being engulfed in a wild fire of falsehood. What are we going to do to put out that fire? We might be spending too much time pouring water on that fire. Perhaps we should do what some rural firemen do. To put out one fire they light another! And to put out a raging fire at a rogue burning oil well, an explosion is used to 'blow' those out.

So the best way to put out this fire of error, which is all around us is to build a bigger fire – for the truth. Somebody must make the truth known. That's what verses 14 and 15 are clearly teaching. Surely!

- The second thing about preaching:

There can be no effective preaching unless you've been sent. **And you have been sent!** For proof of this look at Matthew 28:16-20⁵. Surely it's time to stop the 'wriggling'. We have been sent! Every Christian has been sent.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

He tells the disciples to go everywhere and tell the Gospel. And he says that when you have got some baptised converts, you must teach them to do everything that I have told you. But He has just told them to go and spread the Gospel.

It follows then that every Christian has been sent! In that sense. That's why when the Church in Jerusalem was horribly persecuted, we read that those that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4). They went spreading the 'good news'. Here are some people travelling to Rome. There are some Christians in the group of travellers, so they talk to the others. Here are some heading for Samaria and they talk to the others travelling with them. Others do the same going to Antioch. They didn't say that they didn't have a licence or weren't specially sent by the Church. Not been ordained or been to Theological College! They didn't say any of those things. They had received a message, so they had to deliver it. And they did.

It is true that some men and women are particularly sent. Some have particular impulses and inward constraints to go to certain people or groups of people. Some have certain spiritual gifts, by which they are able to preach the Word of God more easily and more effectively than others or to certain groups of people. Also, always in the history of the Church, there have been those who have been sent out in a particular way – just as Paul and Barnabas were sent out from the Church at Antioch, to evangelise Galatia, where there were no known Christians and so far no Christian Churches. They were commissioned by God and that

5 The Great Commission.

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in [b] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Commission was recognised by the Church. They were sent out in a particular and official way.

However, in all cases, the message they carried was not invented by them, but being revealed. In all cases people go because they are told. In all cases they don't go in their own name, but in their Master's.

“What right have you got to spread your religion and thrust it down my throat?” You may be challenged. The right that you have is not that you go in your name. You go in the Master's Name. And in all cases where anybody is sent in this world, you report back to the Person who sent them. So prayer – speaking to God about men – always goes with preaching, which is speaking to men about God! The two are never separated.

As we close come back to the specific part of our passage, Romans 10:13-15. Here in verse 15 we see that this closes with a sort of vision.

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” Here are men and women in a valley. Coming down the side of the valley is a great army. What is this army coming for? Is it coming to destroy. Are they dressed in armour and military uniforms? Are they carrying horrific weapons for a massacre?

In fact as they see the army coming down they see there is no armour and no weapons. This army is not coming to destroy but to bless. It is not bringing bad news, but good. It's not an ugly sight. It's surpassingly pleasant. Some can remember when someone else brought you the Gospel. You remember with great affection, the person who spoke to you about Christ. You can even name different members of an army of heralds. Even today you can remember Christians you met years ago (or perhaps recently) who brought the Gospel to you. Your heart wells up with pleasure and you find the mental 'sight' of those people exceedingly pleasant. Is that how others now see you and me? Are you a member of that army? Are you going to join?

[2353]

**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**

Full Sermon from S Olyott – see website

Romans 12 Consecration

Rom 12:1

¹I 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.

I continue to be guided in this brief summary by the work of Stuart Olyott.⁶

What truths the apostle has taught us in the preceding chapters which constitute the doctrinal section of his letter! How glorious his exposition of the gospel has been! How rich we are in Christ! How marvellously God has dealt with undeserving sinners!

But all this raises a problem. How am I to respond to such love? Having received such mercies from God, what am I to do by way of gratitude? I cannot bring a thank offering, as was done in Old Testament times, for all those sacrifices have been rendered obsolete [by the once for all perfect sacrifice of Jesus]. I will praise with my lips, of course, but somehow this does not seem to be enough. What am I to do?

Paul's answer, as paraphrased by Olyott, is found in verses 1 & 2:

'The answer to your problem lies in one word – consecration. Instead of giving a sacrifice, be one! As surely as those animals were laid down without reserve, so put your bodies at God's disposal. Let the bodies which once served sin, serve Him. Let your response be, not a life laid down, but a life lived for Him. Devote yourself to holy living and to pleasing God. This is your spiritual worship, as opposed to the Old Testament way of sacrifice.'

'After all, God's mercies have made you God's people – so do not live as if you were not. In other words, do not live like everybody else. Do not let the people around you pressurise you into being like them. Concentrate, instead, on being pleasing to Him. This cannot be done by merely adopting certain outward practices. It requires the transformation of your mind. It is by being different in your thought life that you will be different outwardly. Give yourself entirely to pleasing Him. Let that be the fixed principle of your mind. Put God's will to the test in this way, and you will prove it to be good, acceptable and perfect.'

Paul thus, following his doctrinal teaching of the earlier chapters, begins Chapter 12 with the call for consecration and separation, which will lead to a life of fulfilment, satisfaction and blessedness. Live for God, submitting completely to Him. The only reas-

onable response we can make to the mercies God has poured upon us through the gospel. Rather than to spoil our lives, God's way will fully enrich our lives. Since we were made for Him what else should we expect?

The only proper response for all that God has done for us in Christ is to give ourselves. Merely giving things to God is only consecration by proxy. That is the 'living sacrifice' is the only true and proper worship.

Thus the principle, give myself to pleasing God, is clear. What specifically, then does this entail? Paul goes on to detail God's will for us in a number of areas:

Before discussing God's will for the believer as an individual, Paul emphasises God's will for the believer at church. How the believer behaves as part of the 'body of Christ' – the visible church community. This is the first area where God expects obedience. Submit to what He has revealed concerning Church life. In the New Testament Church the first thing the new Christian did was to be baptised and in this to join the fellowship of the Church.

v 3. 'You must start by having a realistic view of the gifts that God has given you. This is the point which I, as an apostle of Christ, (remember this is Paul speaking) want to stress first and I want to bring it to the attention of every one of you. You will be tempted to think too much of yourself. Resist this temptation, and instead seek to come to a sober, realistic and a balanced assessment of your gifts. In precisely what ways has God equipped you to be of benefit to the body of Christ?'

v 4-5. 'You see, each church of Christ is like a body. He is the head, and each member is an organ, linked not only to the head, but also to the other members, There are many different organs, each with a different function, and yet there is only one body. The pattern is diversity within unity. Each one of us is gifted, but we are not all gifted in the same way. There are real and important differences between us in this area, but this does not threaten the unity of the body in any way. Each organ functions differently, and yet each organ has the same purpose – the good of the body as a whole.'

v 6. 'The gifts differ according to the grace which gives them, yet it is the same grace which gives all the gifts.'

So all gifts are useful. All are important and needed. There is nobody in Christ's church who should say, "I can't do anything". "There is nothing for me to do." Everyone is gifted in some way, Paul says. Having encouraged us to discover our gift he urges us to use it, as he continues:

'Do you have the gift of making God's mind known to the people? Then do that: no more, and no less. Behave proportionally to your faith.'

v 7. 'If you have the gift of serving the congregation, then get on with it. If you are gifted in instructing the minds of God's people, then proceed to that task.'

v 8. 'Perhaps you are particularly gifted at addressing people's consciences, and spurring them to duty. Then give yourself to it. If giving is your strong point, do it liberally and without fuss. If it is ruling, be sure to be diligent, and not negligent. If yours is a ministry of helping those in distress, do it with a cheerful spirit.'

That is find out what you are good at. The ways that can benefit the fellowship, which is the body of your Saviour. This is where we believers are to start, when we wish to thank the Lord for His mercies towards us. We are to give ourselves unstintingly to the life and ministry of a body of believers of which we are a part. The unrestrained commitment to a local church composed of men and women, who like each of us, have been saved by the Gospel of Christ.

However it is not enough to do the right thing in the church. The thankful believer is to be a certain sort of person. The consecrated person exercises his gifts in the church AND seeks to develop spiritual graces in his personal life. Not one or the other, but both! The paraphrases which follow are a series of short instructions concerning personal behaviour. As we hear them we should be moved to cry out to God, asking Him to strengthen us, so that our behaviours will be more pleasing to Him in the future than in the past:⁷

v 9. 'Let your love for others be real, and not just a "face", that is something put on. [like the Greek actors who wore masks of the characters they played – giving us the word "hypocrite"].]

Let your rejection of whatever is sinful or doubtful be total. Be unashamed of your love for goodness, purity and what is right.

v 10. 'Let the spirit which prevails in the church be one of family feeling and affection. This can be maintained only by thinking more of others than ourselves.'

v 11. 'Be complete strangers to idleness, time-wasting and boredom. Instead, aglow with the Spirit and filled with spiritual zeal, be completely given over to serving the Lord.'

v 12. 'Fill your minds with the thought of your ultimate destiny, and rejoice! In the meantime, patiently endure and bear the various troubles you go through. Do not, even for a moment, lose contact with heaven.'

v 13. 'Many of your fellow believers are in need. Do what you can about it. Search for opportunities to use your home, and constantly have extra folk in the house.' [The needs in this age of universal 'welfare' are in some ways different from those of Paul's culture. But in other ways the same. Perhaps more psychological than physical. Not so long ago we had public, mental health campaign, with the slogan 'Act, Commit, Belong'⁸ – exactly what the church should provide its members.]

7 Note the table which compares these sentences of Paul with those of Jesus, reproduced on the last page.

8 As easy as ABC their web-site proclaims: Act - Be physically, socially and mentally active!

Belong - Keep up friendships, join in club and community events.

Commit - Support a good cause and help others.

v 14. 'Persecution is part of the Christian life, but be careful how you react to it. It is a sin, so do not condone it. None the less, bless those who are against you. Repay them, not with invective, but with loving words.

v 15. 'You should not have a cool detachment from other people's joys and sorrows, but fully share in them. Take them to your heart as if they were your own. After all we are members of one another.

v 16. 'Preserve unity in the church, and avoid all forms of partiality and favouritism. Be particularly careful not to have high views of yourself. The way to avoid this is to have ordinary people as your intimate friends. Never get to the point where you think you are "too good" for certain sorts of people.' (Prov 3:5-8)

⁵ *Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.*

⁶ *In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.*

⁷ *Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.*

⁸ *It will be healing to your flesh^[1]
and refreshment^[2] to your bones.*

Footnotes:

1. Proverbs 3:8 Hebrew *navel*
2. Proverbs 3:8 Or *medicine*

v 17. 'Never retaliate when you are wronged, whoever may have done it. Keep your life free from all justified criticism.'

v 18. 'Do all you possibly can to live at peace with others.' It is not always possible. But one must not have a 'taste' for discord. However when truth is at stake, a believer may have to take action which will cause him to be unpopular, even hated.

v 19. 'Never get your own back. Do not steal God's prerogative. Get out of the way let God act. It is His prerogative to mete out justice – not yours – and He has promised that he will.' (Deut. 32:5)

⁵*They have dealt corruptly with him;
they are no longer his children because they are blemished;
they are a crooked and twisted generation.)*

v 20-21. 'Indeed, you should repay evil with every imaginable form of kindness. It is better for a man to be pricked by a sense of shame now than to suffer the punishment of fire later. [Paul has reason to reflect on this as he remembers the way Stephen accepted his martyrdom.] Shame your opponents into submission. Conquer them, not by engaging in retaliation, but with genuine kindness. Do not

allow evil to conquer you, as would happen if you adopted their tactics. Conquer evil with good.'

So the picture Paul has given us of the thankful Christian is this:

- A person whose single aim is to please his merciful Saviour. To place all that he is and has at the Lord's disposal. Crying, "Your will be done, whatever the outcome."
- Being obedient to God's will, he enters into intimate union with a body of fellow believers, which he seeks to serve and benefit in every way that his abilities allow.
- Both inwardly and outwardly, he follows the instructions that God has given concerning the living of his personal life. Being thus quite different from the men and women around him. Not odd, but living a life that is selfless, pure, meek and busy – both upward and outward-looking.

The instructions of this chapter are a thermometer by which we may gauge our spiritual temperature. We have learned how thankful Christians are expected to live. The extent of our thankfulness can be measured by seeing how seriously we are attempting to live by what we have read.

[2014]

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

Full parallel Sermon from S Olyott – see website

Paul

Jesus

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse (12:14).	Bless those who curse you (Luke 6:28).
Live at peace with everyone (12:18).	Be at peace with each other (Mark 9:50).
If your enemy is hungry, feed him (12:20).	Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you (Luke 6:27).
Render to all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due (13:7).	Render to Caesar what is Caesar's ... (Mark 12:17).
He who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the Law (13:8).	Love the Lord your God ... Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the prophets depend on these two commandments (Matt. 22:37-40).
The commandments ... are summed up in this one rule, 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (13:9).	Do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 7:12).
Understanding this present time, rise up from your sleep, because salvation is nearer now (13:11).	How is it you don't understand this present time? (Luke 12:56) Do not let him find you sleeping (Mark 13:36). Your redemption is drawing near (Luke 21:28).

Copied from page 268 of *ROMANS The Revelation of God's Righteousness*, Paul Barnett

Romans 11

What About Israel?

Philippians 3:3

³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—

In 1948 the State of Israel was established in Palestine. At that time the Jews themselves couldn't decide what to call it, except to say that by a margin of one vote they chose Israel over Judah. Thus a new Nation appeared after a very long absence. Many have seen this as a fulfilling of Old Testament prophecy!

In addition some Christians for 2000 years have held the view that at the last days the vast majority of what are generally called the Jews will turn to Christ.

So it is important that we give a Biblical answer to the question: What About Israel?

But firstly consider, "What is a Jew?" The only definition in the words of men, is the definition adopted by the current State of Israel to determine eligibility for their prospective citizens: A Jewish mother and practise no other religion (ie could be an atheist) is sufficient.

But this is far from the Bible's definition as we find it in Romans 2: Here Paul has been speaking about the judgement at the end of the world. The Jews in his context have been acknowledging that in their view other people should be judged, but that God would not treat the Jew like other people. The Jew is special to God. They are His people with His law and Covenant. They have on their bodies the sign of this special treatment. Privileged like none other in the world. So not to be judged like everybody else! So Paul says, "You've got God's law, but do you keep it? You've got circumcision, but it doesn't mean very much. It should be a sign of being set apart for God. If you live a life for God then it means something, but if you don't what value is it? While if you are an uncircumcised Gentile, but you do live for God, well you don't need the sign, since you've already got the thing that really matters. The thing of which the sign speaks. Jewishness isn't a matter of the 10 Commandments. It isn't a matter of being circumcised or having Abraham as your father."

So to his definition from verse 28: *²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.* There are certain people who don't have Abraham as their 'father', but they love God's law. They don't have the mark of circumcision on their bodies, but they seek to live for God. They're not descended from anybody mentioned in the Bible, but their hearts are right with God and they try to live to His praise. Those only, according to the Bible, are the true Jews in God's eyes!

As God looks through His world, He doesn't recognise anyone as a Jew, simply because he's descended from Abraham. Or because he has undertaken certain rites and ceremonies in a Synagogue. But when He sees a man or woman, young person, boy or girl, who loves His law and whose heart is right with Him, through the Gospel. He says, "That's one of My people! ... He's one of Mine, so is she." Those are the true Jews. There are no other Jews in the world.

Alternatively, look at further Bible references. Romans 4:11 This talks about Abraham. ¹¹ *He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, ...* Paul is saying there that Abraham was right with God before he was circumcised. So the true children of Abraham are not those who have Jewish circumcision, but those who are right with God. Not just descended from Abraham but only if you have the same faith as Abraham had.

Galatians 6:14-15 ¹⁴ *But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* ¹⁵ *For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.* The only thing Paul is passionately proud of and will glory in, is Christ and His Cross. It doesn't matter 'two straws' if you are circumcised or uncircumcised as long as you've been made new by the Gospel. ¹⁶ *And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.* It's people who passionately adore the Cross and have been made new by the Gospel, those upon whom there will be peace and mercy: that's the **Israel of God!** Those are the true Jews according to the Word of God.

Philippians 3:3 Here Paul warns the Church – a Gentile church. People are going around saying that they had to be Jews first before you can become Christians. Be circumcised before you can be saved. Beware he says of dogs, evil people who mutilate the flesh. Why is the teaching of those of the circumcision nonsense? ³ *For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—* You don't need Jewish rites and ceremonies, because the only Jews – the only circumcision that God recognises are those people who worship Him, and rejoice in Christ Jesus and trust nothing else.

The only true Jews are Christians!

Hebrews 12:22 This is why when Paul writes to Christians he says. ²² *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the **heavenly Jerusalem**, ...* It is those who have faith in Christ who are God's Zion and are the true inhabitants of God's Jerusalem.

All typical professing Christian Congregations are at any time divided into two: Jews and Gentiles. Not physical Jews and Gentiles. As the invisible God looks at the Congregation He sees some who worship Him in their hearts. Who rejoice in Christ Jesus and who don't trust anything else except Christ for their standing with God. He says,

“He’s mine and she’s mine.” Those are the only Jews recognised by God in this world. Everybody else is a Gentile to God.

Israel in the world’s eyes is not the Israel in God’s eyes. If individual Jews, in God’s eyes, are individual believers, then Israel, in God’s eyes, is the whole company of believers put together. Israel, in God’s eyes, is not an earthly nation. Rather, the earthly Nation of the Jews is described in the Bible, in these terms:

- ³⁸ *See, your house is left to you desolate. (Matthew 23:38)*
- ¹⁶ *... But God's wrath has come upon them at last! (1 Thess 2:16b)*
- ⁴³ *Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.*

All this explains why when you read Romans 9:1-5⁹, you will see Paul, who was a Jew, was breaking his heart, because the earthly Nation of the Jews, who after all had the Shekinah glory; 10 Commandments and the Covenants as well as a host of other blessings, had rejected God and He had rejected them.

Paul was in indescribable agony because God had finished with the Jews as a Nation.

True Israel has never been composed of the earthly descendants of Abraham, but of the individual men and women chosen by God who share Abraham’s faith. Most of them today are Gentiles.¹⁰ Read to near the end of Chapter 9 where Paul quotes Hosea and Isaiah to prove this point:

Perhaps this means that God is completely finished with earthly Jews?

This has been answered by our reading today of Romans 11.

Within the nation of earthly Jews there have always been a few who love God and have been true believers, resting on Jesus Christ – a remnant (of whom Paul was one). Now God has stripped off the rest of the Nation and finished with them. In their place He has welcomed the Gentiles. Every person in God’s true Israel is first and foremost a believer and most of these are Gentiles, while there will always be some Jews amongst them. “I’m one of those believers in Christ”, says Paul, “and I happen to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.” The fall of Jews had enriched the Gentiles. How much more enriching is it then by those few Jews who are believers. They will be like – life from the dead.

By this means then Israel¹¹ will be saved. That is: the Israel of God as being described by Paul. So that is how God continues to make His Israel today, from the collection of

9 ¹ *I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.*

10 Many are confused by Roman 9-11, but there is a key which unlocks it at 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,*

11 The adjective, *pas*, in the Greek – used to describe Israel, has the intention of describing the whole Israel as it is defined in the context where it is found: [3956](#) /*pás* (“each, every”) means “all” in the sense of “each (every) part that applies.” The emphasis of the total picture then is on “one piece at a time.” [365](#) (*ananeōō*) then focuses on the *part(s)* making up the whole – viewing the whole *in terms of the individual parts*.

NOT all Israel as the Nation as many commentators suppose.

individual believers most of who are not Jews. And those who do not believe have no place in the olive tree analogy.

So now we are in a position to evaluate the various interpretations of the 'restoration prophecies', which are quoted by some from the Old Testament. Some of these were fulfilled by the end of the Babylonian exile, while others carried conditions which were never met by earthly Nations so they lapsed.

Of the rest there is a principle or two to consider: firstly there are those modern prophetic scholars who overlook that the Old Testament prophets often had to admit that they did not understand the meaning of the revelation they were being given and could only use language of their time. Consequently modern scholars are prone to take them too literally; secondly the Apostles who wrote, or superintended the writing of, the New Testament were inspired by the Spirit of Christ.

What the prophets wrote, regarding the restoration of the Jews that had not already been fulfilled by the time of the Apostles, was interpreted by the Apostles, as the church being the True Israel. And what was written regarding the promised land similarly was interpreted as referring to the spiritual privileges of the Gospel.

For example:

- The prophecy of Joel 2:28-32 with Acts 2:14-21.

The LORD Will Pour Out His Spirit

²⁸ *“And it shall come to pass afterwards,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.*

²⁹ *Even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.¹²*

Peter's Sermon at Pentecost

¹⁴ *But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them:
“Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:*

¹⁷ *““And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;*

¹⁸ *even on my male servants and female servants*

¹² ³⁰ *“And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. ³² And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.*

in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.¹³

- The prophecy of Amos 9:11-15 with Acts 15:13-17.

The Restoration of Israel

¹¹ *“In that day I will raise up
the booth of David that is fallen
and repair its breaches,
and raise up its ruins
and rebuild it as in the days of old,*

¹² *that they may possess the remnant of Edom
and all the nations who are called by my name,”
declares the LORD who does this.¹⁴*

¹³ *After they finished speaking, James replied, “Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name. ¹⁵ And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,*

¹⁶ *“After this I will return,
and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen;
I will rebuild its ruins,
and I will restore it,*

¹⁷ *that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord,
and all the Gentiles who are called by my name,
says the Lord, who makes these things*

In what ways then should this teaching of the Apostle affect our attitudes?

We should witness to Jews. They need the Gospel to be saved just as everyone else. God has His elect amongst them, and so some of them will be converted.

We should not take any special interest in the modern State of Israel, and should certainly not identify the Gospel with pro-Israel politics. Instead, our energies should be harnessed to building up the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ – world wide.

13 ¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke;

²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

14 ¹³ “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD,
“when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper
and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed;
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and all the hills shall flow with it.

¹⁴ I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel,
and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine,
and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.

¹⁵ I will plant them on their land,
and they shall never again be uprooted
out of the land that I have given them,”
says the LORD your God.

**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**

Listen to Stuart Olyott's Sermon: see link on our website

Romans 13 *Church and State*

Rom 13:1a

¹ Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.

The book of Romans is the most sustained explanation of the heart of the Gospel, and the most thrilling exploration of how that Gospel goes to work in our hearts.

The first seven chapters explain the wonderful truths of the Gospel: of justification by faith; of union with Christ; and of salvation through Christ alone and not through our works.

Then comes the second half of the book. In chapters 8 to 16, Paul continues to answer a question he began in chapters 5 to 7: *How does faith in the Gospel of Christ actually lead to change in real life?*

In one sense, Romans 8-16 is in two sections, each beginning “*Therefore*”:

- First in 8:1. *There is **therefore** now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* A summary of the whole ground of *Christian Assurance*. For the believer there can never be any condemnation by, nor separation from, their heavenly Father. Because of the work of His Son on the Cross and the work of His Spirit in our hearts.

He then goes on in chapters 9-11 to show that our salvation is all about God: His choice and His action. So we are humbled and confident. Our merits and efforts are useless, while the work He begins, He certainly will bring to completion!

In the same breath Paul is also able to assert both at the same time the truths of *God’s Sovereignty* and *man’s responsibility*! God chooses His elect to salvation, while those whom He ‘passes’ by, receive the just result of their sinfulness.

- Secondly, in 12:1-2, Paul says: *I appeal to you **therefore**, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, ... Do not be conformed ... but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, ...* This is a summary of the whole of the Christian life. The believer’s life is to be lived, out of gratitude. We live to please our heavenly Father by obeying Him, even at cost or inconvenience.

The rest of Romans shows how we can offer ourselves “as living sacrifices” in all parts of our lives.

In relationship to God (12:1-2); ourselves (12:3-4); others in the church (12:5-8); Christians (12:9-16); and even enemies (12:17-21). Which then brings us to chapter 13:1-7, our relationship to the State.

As we see from this introduction, this passage, from the beginning of Chapter 13, is not an irrelevancy, out of step with the deliberate progress of Paul’s treatment. We have so far found that, of course, as families that we accept and are sure that the word of God is relevant when it tells us what sort of husband, or wife or son or daughter we should be. But as well as being members of families we are also members of earthly

States. Just as the Scriptures tell us how to behave in the family, they also tell us how we are to behave towards the State and what our attitude is to be to the government.

In the first seven verses of chapter 13, we have seven important principles to guide us.

- There is no absolute power in the universe except God. Verse 1: ¹ *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities.* (Now this is the important part ...) **For there is no authority except from God**, ... God's power is absolute! What does that mean? A father rules in his family – he has a right to do so. Where does he get that right from? From God. On the other hand, God has a right and the authority to rule His universe. Where does He get His right from? From Himself, alone! His power is absolute. It doesn't depend on another. Nobody has a right to rule in or of himself, other than God. In all cases where one has authority over another then that authority derives from God.
- Also in verse 1: The governing authorities which exist are established by God – their authority is thus real, but it is not absolute because it is delegated authority. Note that Paul did not say that the authorities he would **like** or approve to be, are established by God. But that it is those **which exist!** In other words the actual civil government that God's providence has brought into existence, is a divine ordinance. Something God has given to the world. Therefore every government has real authority, because it derives its authority from God. But it does not have absolute authority. Only God has that. The authority that it has is a delegated authority.
- Being a divine ordinance: government is to be obeyed in all ordinary circumstances. To resist it is to resist the ordinance of God (verse 2 & 5) ² *Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement.* And also. ⁵ *Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.* Government is God's invention and gift to the world. So in all ordinary circumstances a government which exercises God-given authority is to be submitted to. If you resist the idea of government and in your circumstances, your government, you are resisting the ordinance of God. You are setting yourself against something which God has given and instituted.
- For whose benefit does the government exist? Government exists, according to the Bible, not for its own benefit, but for the benefit of those who are governed. Verse 4. ⁴*for he is God's servant for your good.* But throughout the world we have seen perversion of government. People who get into power usually rule for their own or sectional group interests. [A recent report on the Perth City Council is an example.] Few governments have ruled for the benefit of all the people. None the less the word of God is clear. The government is to govern for the benefit of the people being governed. (verse 1 to 4)
- It's God-given task is to promote justice – to restrain evil by punishing evil-doers, and encourage righteousness by rewarding those who do good. Why has God given government? Why not let us have a free-for-all? Why not have what a previous politician advocated? *Every person has an acre of land to till and a*

cow for milk. Then we are left alone to get on with it. Why must we have people over us?

It wouldn't be long before someone would come along, who wants two cows, so takes yours.

God institutes government to restrain evil, so that the evil doers are punished. While if somebody does good he is praised. (verses 3 to 5)

Some people believe that a purpose of government is to do more than secure justice in the marketplace and prevent lawlessness and anarchy, but also to organise people's lives. There are two types of government apparent in the world: those who try, as best they can, to uphold God's commission; and those who try to go well beyond the commission God has given them.

The God-given task of government is quite plain. It is there for a moral reason and not principally an economic one. There are many things you might do, but God's given you a conscience: so conscience holds you back from sins you would commit. Likewise the influence of the family: holds you back. And God has given the State: there are many things that you would do and others would do, but the thought of the State's punishment, holds you back. It's one of God's ways of restraining evil in the world.

- Government then, can only concern itself with people's **actions** and **deeds** – nothing more. Verse 5. ³ *For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,* ⁴ *for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain.*

The purpose of government is to concern itself with my actions. It may not tell me what I am thinking or what I am to think. The government may punish me if I do evil. It should reward me if I do righteousness. It must step in if I act wickedly. Alternatively it should encourage me and promote circumstances which encourage me to live decently and honestly and for the welfare of others. It can concern itself with my actions and my deeds. The things that can be seen and witnessed. The government should not dictate to me what my mind should think.

- Verses 6-7, together with Mark 12:17¹⁵ ⁶ *For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.* 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.*

Whatever else that is saying, it is saying to us as Christians, that our principal attitude to government is to be one of co-operation and loyalty. We should look upon the government, primarily, as something with which we should co-operate. Which is very much against the 'spirit of the age'! People tend to co-operate only with the things that say exactly what they want said.

We are to give to the government everything that it has a right to demand from us. And this is a great deal. After all it is a divine ordinance. Government requires money to function. Governments have no money, only its citizens have money. Therefore they must tax their citizens. Therefore when I am asked for tax by the government I must pay it.

¹⁵ ¹⁷ Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marvelled at him.

Now with these seven principals to guide us, the answer to typical questions should be apparent. I'll mainly leave these with you, except to occasionally add Olyott's opinion and explanation:

1. Should I as a Christian vote?
If the government insists that you should vote, then we should obey. An ordinance of God. If you have a say in what government governs, this should be counted as a privilege. Many Christians in the world don't have this.
2. Who should I vote for?
The person you, before God, considers most nearly fulfils the purpose of God in that Government or Council. To restrain evil and promote righteousness.
3. Must I obey government policies I don't agree with?
Did Paul agree with the policies of the Roman government of his time? The most powerful in that world while being acutely unjust, cruel in many areas of life. See again verse 1.
4. Is it ever right to disobey a government? (Consider Mark 12:17 - *to God the things that are God's* ; Acts 5:29 - ²⁹ *But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. , Daniel 3:6 - ⁶ And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace."*)
5. May the government have a say in the affairs of churches?
The office bearers of the church should not be chosen or otherwise installed by the State. But the temporal functions of government: health, parking, building standards and even the rules for legal associations (charities, tax exemptions) are admitted and required.
6. May the churches have a say in the affairs of the government? Not the Church speaking as the Church – so that its primary message of the Gospel (repent and believe) is not blunted and sidelined¹⁶. But Christian individuals should be active in government. They are to be the 'salt of the earth' and bring a Christian aspect to every aspect of life that they touch upon.
7. How should I behave toward unconverted people in authority?
When exercising the authority of his position, he is entitled to respect, honour and obedience. (Verse 6)
8. How serious are "minor offences"?
Dropping litter; just over the speed limit; missed paying a fare: fudging a divine ordinance is disrespect of God. (Verse 2)
9. Can revolution be right?
If a government is so evil that the righteous are in fear for their lives, while the evil prosper, then there have, in history, been only two choices: complete anarchy with the complete breakdown of law and order; or 'the replacement of the

¹⁶ The Church as the Church has 3 tasks from God: The Worship of God; the strengthening of each other in the Christian faith; and preaching the Gospel to the lost.

present government, without its consent’.

10. Does the state have power to inflict capital punishment?

*But if you do wrong, be afraid, **for he does not bear the sword in vain.** For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. To this add portion of God's Covenant with mankind through Noah: Genesis 9:5b-6. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.*

⁶ *“Whoever sheds the blood of man,
by man shall his blood be shed,
for God made man in his own image.*

11. May the State wage war?

Should government be charged with promoting justice, restraining evil and encouraging the righteous only within its borders yet be mute to influences which invade its borders in opposition to the above?

Romans 13 guides us as individual Christians to see our duty to the State in which we live. It is not principally about the topic of the relationship between the State and the Church as institutions. However the seven principles and the thoughts generated when seeking answers to the questions sheds some light on two prominent historical examples of false Church and State relationships”

- Popery. Where the Roman Pontiff claims to exercise the swords of power and authority in both the spiritual and temporal realms.
and
- Erastianism. Where the State regards itself as a divine institution, whose purpose is to provide for all the needs of men and women, spiritual as well as temporal. This has plagued England for 400 years. The concept of a State fostered, governed and ‘established’ Church has led to the unGodly and non-Biblical idea of a Protestant nation. Which has had the effect of making many people with a habitual and social membership of such a State Church being lulled in a false sense of being believers and kept them from trusting only in and calling on Christ, just as the ancient Jews relied on genetic descent from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Both these errors have led to civil persecution of those who did not conform, with many forfeiting their lives for their beliefs.

Today the risk is from State sponsored secularist and relativist social policies.

[2446]

**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**

Full parallel Sermon from S Olyott – see website