

Offering

Serving under God's mercy



A Discipleship School

David Boan

8



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Unit 8

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“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”. Romans 12.1-2 [NASV].

Session 7 - In Review: stated as an outcome

Even at our first hearing of the good news of the apostles' preaching, we recognise that there has been a work of the Spirit attending that preaching. The ***Spirit brought us to certain convictions***, deep within ourselves, concerning our sin of unbelief, that Christ was a righteous Son of God and that Satan had been condemned, judged and his work destroyed.

We appreciate now that the "being' we have is entirely a matter of how God sees us - and that He sees us "in Christ". Accepting this foundation for our life as true, we then set out to respond to God's own revelation of His Person, knowing that this ***'gift' of being comes before any 'task' of doing*** in our response to God. Further, this 'gift' is also the basis for our responding in the first place.

Response to God is about repentance and faith, both are commanded. These are the elements of all our responses to Him. Either, we are changing our mind and life from a direction and commitment we had been engaged upon, or we are trusting God's word to us upon which we live and relate to Him. Often we are doing both at once.

The grace of God draws a repentance from us. This is not a legal matter; rather it is the accommodation of our lives to God's commands because we are his children. So it leads to change for the better - in keeping with the One with Whom we have to do. Personal repentance, the leaving of an old life and the embracing of the new is common to all Christians and it deeply affects our corporate life as we live it out together.

Faith is the trusting reception of the revelation that God has made to us. So we live on the basis of what we now know of God. It is the response to God which he treasures and reckons as righteousness to us, for it is the basis of the right relating that takes place in the Trinity of the God.

Our united life with God is lived out within our own persons. Following Paul the apostle, we learn to recognise the ***functioning of our inner man, as spirit and soul***, while we live in an, as yet, un-redeemed, ***body***. Through this we recognise the intuitive knowing that comes through the union of our spirit with the Spirit of the Father and the Son, which is the basis of our shared communion with God and our worship of Him. We intuitively know our conscience to be the witness of God to our inner man - it is our moral centre. We see the soulful life transformed in how we think, decide and respond to emotional motivations drawn from us by the Spirit. Our body, which must live at this present time as a dead thing indwelt by the power of sin, nevertheless can be made alive, moment-by-moment, by the power of the Spirit within us, as we co-operate with the Spirit to ***let*** it so happen.

Peace, hope and joy are the deeply embedded experiences of our inner man. These arise within us as we take the revelation of God by faith and rely on Who God is towards us in Christ and by the Spirit.

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The offering of ourselves to God is a holy thing. It expresses in practical, everyday life that our relationship to Him, and He to us, is exclusive, total and permanent. We find that our whole person is required. For each of us, as we simply accept the work God has been objectively done for us in Christ, and as it now moves to being a subjective work happening in us through His Spirit, then it engenders a response that ranges over the whole of our existence. This is the fullest, most absorbing, and deepest personal engagement of our whole life.

In any human life, things happen in which a person has been caught up. These events leave a lasting influence in their emotional responses. Subsequently, a person can find that these responses, some emotional, some more of a conviction, become strong motivators for later life. What has happened to us through the saving work of Christ is foundational for our life now. Something has happened which forever colours the life that follows - we are not the same. Somehow we are caught up in Christ's own 'salvation history' for us - everyone is, whether they acknowledge it or not. But if we do know it and acknowledge it - then we also know within ourselves that we have changed. Our motivations for life are set by our responses to this great happening.

In the letter to the Romans, chapters 9-11, Paul presents a continued explanation of the gospel. Paul shows how the gospel, having first arisen out of the promises of God to Israel, has now gone to the Gentile world. This state of affairs highlights the fact that the Jewish people themselves have not, by and large, accepted the gospel as the fulfilment of what God first promised them.

How is this to be understood? Paul sets out to show us how to understand this Jewish rejection, for if, as he puts it, "...the word of God had failed" then that would mean, amongst other things, that it did not benefit those to whom it was first promised. That would have serious implications for what we have come to trust about that fulfilment of the Old Testament as well.

Paul's answer to this question is worked out by a powerful consideration of the mercy of God. What comes to us, whether we are people of Jewish or Gentile origins, is a powerful picture of the way God has dealt with us all. It is this picture of being a person who has received mercy that has a deep impact upon our motivations for offering ourselves to God as our reasonable service to Him. It colours the whole of our life now. This is worked out, # 355-358, after we have considered the mercy of God.

1 -The Mercy of God

327 - The community of God takes two forms: Israel and the Church

My exposition is indebted to Barth, K. Church Dogmatics.

To appreciate the election of God and how His choice “stands” in relation to Israel and the Church, requires us to consider both the Church and Israel as the elect people of God. They must be considered together and as a unity. For Jesus, Who is the elect Man, the man of God’s choice, shows forth two sides of God’s own action. On the one hand, God has chosen, in His free act of love, to have fellowship with man for Himself; this made it necessary that Jesus would endure God’s own judgment for us. On the other hand, God has also chosen that human beings should have fellowship with Himself; this means from our side that man will come to know the glory of the mercy of God. The first move, God’s action of mercy, makes certain that man shall hear the statement of the promise. To see the glory of this mercy means that we shall come to trust it.

First, in the limited, particular, Jewish context, Jesus is the crucified Messiah of Israel. He bears witness to the judgment which a holy God must take upon Himself when He chooses fellowship with sinful men and women. As true man, Jesus is the first Hearer of the divine promise. At the same time, in the role of the crucified Messiah, He is also the secret Lord of the Church. For His Church is a new form of the coming community of God, which is a people from every tribe and tongue, who will find their life in His self giving and believe His promise.

Second, in the universally inclusive, Christian context, Christ is also the risen Lord of the Church. He bears witness to the mercy of God in choosing that men and women are to have fellowship with Himself. Christ’s witness shows the glory of God. He is the original pattern for the believer. Being the crucified Messiah of Israel, He declares, by bearing it, God’s judgment. Yet, in this judgment there is a promise to be heard, and so there is a way for a new community to come. As that is so, there is a witness to the fact that the form of the old community is passing.

So then, the electing - the choosing - of the community of God is neither centred on Israel nor on the Church but on both as viewed together. But this unity takes two very different forms; for the one, there is the acceptance of that election, for the other, generally speaking in the present time, the rejection of that election. In the case of the Church, the form of the community shows the mercy of an electing God turning towards man. For the ancient people of Israel, the form of the community shows the human turning away from the electing God.

But the two communities are not exclusive, they have something in common. For, in the case of Israel, there was hardness and rejection of God: yet the electing God has taken this rejection upon Himself, and He constantly holds out his hands to an obdurate people [Ro-

mans 10.16-21]. In the case of the Church, the form of the community shows a people elected by God for the same reason; that God has taken the rejection of mankind upon Himself. Both communities are witnesses to the mercy of God.

328 - The word of God had not failed

Romans 9.1-5

Paul is aware that the Jewish people's response to the gospel has been reserved and careful - and consequently few in number. From that quarter, there has been considerable opposition to the gospel, for it challenges, not to the truth of the Old Covenant of God, but the traditional Jewish understanding of that Covenant and of their place within it.

In each city Paul visited, his evangelistic practice was to begin with the Jewish synagogue - provided, of course, that there was one there. He took the message first to the Jews as a matter of course, for his message was simply an extension of the promises of God to Israel. It was a foundational matter, about which he was always ready to remind the Gentiles [Romans 11.18]

But even as his heart had been given to Christ, this led him to have a deeper concern for his own kinsmen. [Romans 9.1-5]. He was aware of the beauty of what God had done in Christ; who was their Messiah, according to the flesh. Paul wished his Jewish kinsmen to share in what was, essentially, their own heritage.

Yet, he was acutely aware that the response of the Jews was often quite hard-hearted. Paul's response to that response was that he turned to the Gentiles. He did not do this out of spite for his countrymen. Rather, he took the current Jewish response as something which was according to the plan of God which He had already foreshadowed; he knew it would further God's good purposes - especially for the Jews themselves.

Paul had no difficulty in comprehending that the unbelief and the disobedience of men could be embraced within the work of God's mercy. If, as the gospel was preached, the majority of Jewish people stood outside the inner circle of election - the Israel within Israel - this conformed to God's pattern of working seen in the Old Testament. If that was the case in the Old Testament pattern then there was no proof that the declared purpose [word] of God had failed.

329 - Children of the flesh and children of promise

So, the Jewish response to the apostolic gospel message did not mean that the word of God had failed. For, as the earlier sections of Romans had made clear, God was the God of both Jews and Gentiles [Romans 2.14]. And further to that, even in Israel itself, the trust shown towards God had always involved God reckoning a man righteous through faith. Abraham's

life had shown that clearly [Romans 4.10-17].

Within Israel, Paul declared that there had always been a distinction that God had made. There were children of promise and children of the flesh.

"...they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel" [Romans 9.6].

Paul illustrated this from God's clear statement to Abraham that it was through Isaac that his descendants would be named, not through Ishmael [Genesis 22.12]. This had nothing to do with the two boys themselves. It had to do with the promise of God. Isaac had been promised to Abraham and Sarah, Ishmael was not. The same matter of God's word being the central issue was also exemplified in Rebekah's children, Jacob and Esau.

Paul drew attention to the "promise" to indicate that faith must be exercised for the reception of these promises, as it was for Abraham [Romans 4.13,20-21]. These matters had nothing to do with fleshly decisions of men and women, but with God's choice being allowed to stand [Romans 9.11]. It had to do with Him who called. This was the decisive issue upon which the destiny of any people would be established.

We must put our hope here as well - the foreknowledge and predestination of God is the surest source of comfort and solidity to our hope. Knowledge of it strengthens us as nothing else can.

330 - Relationship between mercy and justice.

In any kingdom, the monarch had to judge the cases of his subjects and to decide for those in the right and against those in the wrong. The distribution of justice was the primary concern in the government of any kingdom. In the ancient world, to come before a monarch involved the giving of a decision - a judgment.

Those who came before a king and were found to be in the wrong, had lost their case and so were liable to penalty. In this situation, justice was done. Whether someone lost their case, or was vindicated, all the nobles and the elders would concur with the King about the decision handed down. They had witnessed the affairs of the kingdom; they had seen the justice of their monarch. While it was true that the king was the seat of justice - and so the judgment and administration of justice was not the nobles to make - their wisdom could concur with, and so confirm, the wisdom of the good king.

Afterwards, there would be the administration of the verdict. This would involve the exaction of penalties, the administration of compensation and setting things to rights. The nobles and the elders could participate in that as well. They would help their king in the administration of these matters as it pleased him.

But, as all the elders would understand, in the case of those who had lost their case, and so had become liable to a penalty, where a King was administering, it was not always the end

of the matter. There was an avenue of action that remained to the monarch alone - and that was his free choice of mercy. Mercy could be granted by a merciful king, and this was not a matter in which the nobles or the elders had any say, nor would wish to do so, for this was entirely the prerogative of the monarch .

Mercy is exercised, not in respect of the justice of the issue, but in respect of the person and their circumstances appertaining after the matter has been judged. Mercy is a sovereign's exercise of will about a person who has lost their case once they have been judged. The exercise of mercy is not in conflict with justice. While it is often exercised in a judicial setting, it is not strictly speaking a matter of law. It is not integral to the administration of justice. Whether the sovereign did not exercise mercy, or he did so, justice would still have been done. And if mercy is exercised, justice is also said to be done - for the matters were judged aright. There is, says Paul, "no injustice with God, is there?" [Romans 9.14]

Jesus preached the "kingdom of God". His view was that God is a sovereign Monarch and his apostles, knew Jesus was the resurrected Son of God and an enthroned co-regent of the kingdom. It is important to notice that justice is a matter of judgment, a matter of what is right in the situation. It calls for discrimination and appreciation of the nature of things. In the kingdom of God it arises from the righteousness of God's character; when He judges a matter He "does right".

The choice and foreknowledge of God are to be understood as the mercies of God to us. What is removed here is any suggestion that it would depend on the man who runs, or who wills [decides. It depends only on God, Who has mercy [Romans 9.16].

Paul also wants us to be aware that, whenever a sovereign exercises mercy, then the mercy shown to those "vessels" - created beings - of mercy can only be known and appreciated by them as they live alongside those who did not receive mercy [Romans 9.23]. For, in life lived as we know it, that is the only way it may be manifestly seen.

In such historical circumstances, Paul says the persons who do not receive mercy are "hardened" [Romans 9.17-18, 11.7-10]. This is to take into account that humans are seen as responsible. They are committed to a way of life which the justice of God already shows to be wrong and liable to judgment. To be "hardened" is to be set in that way of life. It is only by the mercy of God that persons who are rebels could ever be found in a different place - with their hearts softened by the appreciation of the mercy of God.

331— God has chosen, differentiated and divided in Israel

Romans 9.6-13

A running summary of the argument as it is developed through Romans 9, 10 and 11 is presented here. In what follows, where there is no reference, the numbers refer to the chapter and verse in Romans.

9.7 God had, from the very first, chosen, differentiated and divided people in Israel.

9.6a Paul did not lament over Israel without at the same time rejoicing for Israel's sake in the faithfulness of God. A faithfulness which is the confirmation of their election.

9.6b-7a Yet, as all were appointed to be bearers of the name Israel, not all were to be appointed to be members of the Church – which contains Jew and Greek - hidden in Israel and revealed in Jesus Christ. Strictly speaking, Jesus alone is Israel. Election was the living order of Israel from the beginning and so the resistance of Israel to the message of the Church was not a surprise - it had always been in accordance with God's order.

9.7b. It is not the life which arose from Abraham's flesh and blood as such, but the life arising from the truth and the power of the promise given to Abraham that was the life of the children of God, the pre-existent Church in Israel. These 'children of promise' were counted as the "seed" of Abraham. And they were also a witness to the election of all Israel.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians 4.21-31, we notice that: [1] there were two sons of the one Abraham, one of the flesh, the other of promise; [2] in both cases, we are dealing with two covenants; [3] Hagar stands for the covenant of Sinai, realised within earthly limitations by Jerusalem; [4] Sarah is the first covenant without limitations, our mother, realised in Jerusalem above.

It is from the law itself [Galatians 4.21] and from Scripture [Galatians 4.22,27,30] that Paul derived what is common to them both. Israel and the Church were twofold - the Church received Abraham's promise anew and directly on the ground of special choice.

9.6 So the word of God, rather than being proved false, was established by the unbelieving Jews. According to the testimony of Scripture, God had from the first chosen, differentiated and divided in Israel. And, in doing that, He had confirmed the election of Israel.

9.9-13 This same point was now demonstrated not only with two sons of the same father - Isaac and Ishmael - but two of the same mother - Jacob and Esau. Verse 11 states that their historical meaning did not have to do with their life style and deeds. It had to do with "God's purpose according to His choice" [9.11]. But it was equally clear that the God of Jacob was also the God of Esau. God, who elected Abraham and his whole race, united the servant with the master, the hated with the loved one, the rejected with the elected [9.13]

While the decisive factor of election and rejection is uppermost, it must not be forgotten that both Hagar and Ishmael were cared for by God [Genesis 21.17ff]. Similarly, Esau was not forgotten by God but is the ancestor of a covenant people [Genesis 36, 1 Chronicles 1]. This should not be overlooked in understanding what "rejection" means in the midst of election of the race. In Israel there was always an Israel that was excluded by the free choice of God. The current rejection by the Jews of their Messiah is not a new phenomenon; and it does not prove the Word of God false.

332 - What is God's purpose with the Ishmael or Esau He "hated"?

Romans 9.14-18

First, it must be clear from what has already been shown that God is constant - He had acted this way all along. But was God unrighteous? [9.14]. Paul answered, "God forbid" [Romans 3.4,6; 7.7; 11.1,2]. He was not acting contrary to His already perceived order, but righteously, in harmony with Himself.

"For He says to Moses": "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and compassion on who I have compassion" [Exodus 33.19 parallels Exodus 3.14].

God's nature was consistent in that He was currently showing mercy and He will continue to do so in the future.

9.17, "for the Scripture says to Pharaoh" - confirms the same thing as 9.15. How does Pharaoh do this, where does he fit alongside Moses? [For he occupied the place which Saul of Tarsus did and which the unbelieving Jews do now!] The decisive thing was not because he had willed or run, but because God [v.15] in his righteous way had put him there!

An act of mercy by a sovereign is not necessarily followed by another. This is the negative side of the truth stated in 9.15. Pharaoh, Esau and Ishmael were affected by this negative side; although God had given mercy to Pharaoh as well. He certainly honoured him as a leader of his nation insofar that He "asked" him to let God's people go. The full context of Exodus 9.15ff reveals that God had warned Pharaoh through a series of miracles and Pharaoh had seen his own guilt and acknowledged it [Exodus 9.27, 10.16]. Pharaoh is recorded as having appealed to Moses to intercede on his behalf [Exodus 8.8, 28;9.28; 10.17]. Moses prayed often for him [Exodus 8.12,30;9.33;10.18].

However, what does not befall Pharaoh is a repeated act of mercy as is the case for Isaac, Jacob and Moses. God, in His free mercy, refused him this future. However, the original mercy of God towards him was not in vain, for God had a definite and positive purpose. God's lifting up of His own Name was accomplished through Pharaoh as it was with Moses.

In this way, the purpose of God was not found in the willing or the running of Moses, or of Pharaoh, but was found to depend on God Himself, who has mercy. The will of God then, was not indeterminate and arbitrary. It was determined by the Character and Name of God Himself [9.15]. The "having mercy" and the "hardening" were both found within the circle of God's mercy. It is a mercy He shows to all, which must be His way of working when all are under disobedience [11.32].

This purpose of God was seen as unified, although carried out in Moses and Pharaoh in different ways. Moses was chosen as a witness of God's mercy and Pharaoh as a witness of His judgment, which is necessary wherever there is this mercy. Moses was the voluntary witness, Pharaoh was involuntary servant of God's power and His Name. His mercy was renewed to Moses; it was refused to Pharaoh.

The thing which Paul had uppermost in his mind here was not the individual situation and destiny of the person themselves. Wherever the doctrine of predestination has been understood as an absolute decree of God, rather than as a subset of His mercy, such understanding has missed the point by focussing on the individuals. It is ultimately a man-centred and man-driven answer.

Paul's main emphasis was on what God is doing in relation to the **whole** of His elect people. He used the diversity of Moses and Pharaoh to indicate the whole election of Israel and the righteousness of God. There was, of necessity, a revelation of the kindness of God and also of the severity of God in such a situation of mercy [11.22]. But it was not an arbitrary will of an indeterminate God simply acting on an indeterminate man.

333 - The parable of the potter - not a "raw power" answer.

Romans 9.19-24; Jeremiah 18.1-10

Any man hearing this argument, naturally begins to erect his own defence against God. For, from what he has heard in Romans 9.17-18, when he looks at his own "willing" and "running" he may see himself as put by God amongst His enemies without regard to what he can advance in favour of his own efforts. Questions may arise within such a man.

Paul anticipated two questions "Why does He still find fault? Who can resist His will?" However, Paul gave an answer without any recourse to God's power. He did not say "God is a Creator with power to deal with you along the lines it seems He will - so, who are you to object?" Of course this is true, and God does have power. But it was not along such lines that Paul's answer ran.

"On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this"; will it?" [Romans 9.20 ASV]

Paul asserted the great difference that existed between the Creator and the creature. But it was not simply a matter of the difference, but of the maker's right to make a person for the use [purpose] that He had in mind for him. For a man is as he is so that the "works of God might be displayed in him" [John 9.3 ASV].

Paul is thinking of the Creator who is also the Redeemer, and so with an understanding of the power God has exercised in what He has done through the Man Christ Jesus. In the face of this love, it becomes a man to approach God humbly. A reply might go along these lines: "Whoever you are, whether your name is Ishmael or Isaac, Jacob or Esau, a friend of God like Moses or an enemy like Pharaoh, you are the person on account of whose sin Christ has died for the justification of God and raised for the justification of sinners." Paul meets this objection thoroughly by preaching the gospel of Christ in 10.4-15.

9.21-24 The parable of the potter was based upon Jeremiah 18.1-10. It is stated in 20-21 and then interpreted in 22-24. It asserts the principle that God is free to use witnesses to His mer-

ciful will, to make revelation of His way of doing things in Christ. Whether they are vessels of honour or vessels of dishonour, both bear witness to His merciful purpose. They are joint-witnesses, or witnesses-in-tandem, to Jesus Christ, and each in his own way. Each of them are found in Jesus; as Jesus, Himself, stands in the place of them both. For He is both the rejected and the elected man.

Because there is one purpose of the mercy of God in these vessels, both are necessary to the expression of that one purpose. The vessel of dishonour cannot quarrel with the way he has been made since his shape, in concert with the vessel of honour, and not without it, is that which contributes to the revelation of the purpose of God in making them both. Such a purpose is a revelation of His merciful Character as well [Psalm 30.5, Isaiah 54.7ff; 103.11ff].

It is this relationship between the two ways of operating - vessels of honour and dishonour - which is not seen by the questioner of 9.20a. The 'No' of God to the one is spoken only for the sake of the 'Yes' spoken to the other. The individual may not rise up to question his place; for that would be to act as if he can cancel God's No' about himself. It would attempt to play off the 'No' against the 'Yes' when the 'No' is spoken only for the sake of the 'Yes'. The question is forbidden not because it questions the power of the potter to shape, but by the purpose of the potter expressed by both vessels.

Israel cannot ask "why have You not made me an Israel which is already the Church?" It cannot raise these questions because it has the Church within it from the very first. Both vessels are from the same lump of clay [9.6,21].

9.22-24 If the "potter" imagery and the questions arising from it sound harsh, that harshness was alleviated by Paul when he showed that, in regard to the two actions described - having mercy and hardening - God was expressing, not two disconnected goals, but one. And verse 24 identifies that the enduring of the vessels of wrath was for the sake of the vessels of mercy, and these are those called both Jews and Gentiles. God is wrathful; He judges and punishes as He also shows mercy. And this is done for His mercy's sake, for if it were not, He would not be truly and effectively merciful. God's mercy is seen to be the "riches of His glory".

In Israel's history there were always these vessels of wrath. And the wrath of God preceded mercy. That is how it is in Christ's experience, where God accepts humiliation before exaltation in Christ. As to order, justice always precedes the showing of any mercy.

334 - The election of the Gentiles is the meaning of Israel's election

Romans 9.24-33

The miracle that Paul would have us concentrate upon was that is not that some of the Jews come to believe, but that the Gentiles have. For they are the ones who had no share in the commonwealth of Israel who had no glory, covenants, fathers, Law, temple or Christ [Eph-

sians 2.11-13; Romans 9.4-5]. Previous to Christ's coming, whenever the Gentiles intersect with the history of the Jews, it is the Jews who are the elect. It is God who preserves them from the hostilities of the nations; except, of course, when for Israel's discipline He gives them over to them. Israel's distinction was always that they were discriminated from the Gentiles. God's love for Israel seemed to mean, at least from the Gentile side, that He did not love the nations.

But the situation was not as it seemed. It was not that God concerned Himself incidentally with the nations only for the sake of Israel - it was that God concerned Himself in a special way with Israel *for the sake of* the nations. For this is what the coming of the Messiah, the goal of history, has now shown.

At the present time, in the Church of Jesus Christ, there are few from the elect people of God and many from the Gentiles, the non-elected peoples. How has this come about? What do the Gentiles have to do with the Jewish Messiah?

335 - Death of Jesus united what was once divided - elect and rejected.

Ephesians 2.14-22; 3.6; Romans 9.22-24

One of the results that follow from the death of Jesus was a breaking down of the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles, as they were found in the new community of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Paul, in the letter to the Ephesians, recounts how [1] At the death of Jesus, the veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom - access was now open. [2] As Israel's hope was broken up; so the Church, the secret substance of Israel was already born. [3] The Gentiles within the Church, instead of being strangers and aliens were now "fellow heirs", members of the same body with them, the wall of partition had gone. God had made the two - the elect and rejected - into one; for Jesus, who is both the elect and rejected man, in His own body, is their peace, creating out of the two a new, single humanity in himself [Ephesians 2.14 -18]. [4] Both have access now by one Spirit to the Father [Ephesians 2.18]. All this was a work of the manifold wisdom of God, into which even angels can only gain an insight through the witness provided by the presence of the Christian Church [Ephesians 3.10].

So the point of the assertion in Romans 9.20, which is answered in Romans 9.22-24, is that all the wrath of God upon the one Israel was always co-ordinated with the mercy on another Israel which He was preparing from the first. He has caused it to come to fruition in the form of the Church of Jesus Christ in which there is neither Jew or Greek.

336 - If Hosea 1.10 and 2.23 refers to Gentiles; then certainly also Israel

Romans 9.24-29; Hosea 1.10, 2.23; Isaiah 10.22-23

Paul explains what he means when he says in 9.24 "not from among the Jews only, but also

from the Gentiles." For the majority of the Jews of that day [the ten tribes of Northern Israel] were dispossessed; they found themselves cut off in exile as "not My people" and "not Beloved". Yet, it was clear that the prophecy also spoke of a reversal. They would find that they were to be returned to their former status.

Paul understood that God had fulfilled this through the inclusion of the hordes of the Gentiles. And if that were so, how much surer was the lesser matter of the inclusion of the northern Israel. His promise, given to the rejected of His elected people, has fulfilled the promise to those much more rejected than they. Implied in Paul's argument was the sure encouragement that Israel needed to hang on to this understanding to have hope for herself and those amongst her.

The quotation of Isaiah 10.22-23 and Hosea 1.9 speaks of the remnant of God's people who have a future, otherwise all that was merited was to be treated like Sodom and Gomorrah.

337 - Gentiles did not pursue righteousness, but found it.

Romans 9.30-33

So, for Paul, what had happened was that the Gentiles had found an actual life, which may be lived by faith in the Jewish Messiah. They had no ancestry, no perceptiveness. Without being able to assent to it they have assented. The "calling" of God had come for them, and like those who had woken up from the dead, they have obeyed the call which awoke them [Romans 8.30; 13.11]. It did not depend upon their 'willing' or their 'running', but on God's mercy - as it was also for Moses, Jacob and Isaac.

Israel on the other hand, had all the ancestry, the history, the promises, the Law and the Temple. It had come short, in that it had missed the righteousness God had prepared for it, just as it desecrated the Temple and broken the Law. Israel had a zeal for God. In its willing and running it was on track, going in the direction of the promised fulfilment. But its efforts were not based on faith. It had refused to submissively recognise that the divine purpose was the power of the arrival of a righteousness which was by faith. That faith in God's mercy was the rock on which all true relation to Him was founded. The stone that was being laid in Zion became, to the zealous but negligent builders, a rock of offence, because they rejected it [Psalm 118].

The whole of Romans 10.1-21 is a development of what is said in 9.31-33. While it deals with Israel's guilt, nevertheless, it is for the Church, made up of Jews and Gentiles, to hear that. For Paul was speaking to the Church who by faith in Jesus Christ were elected, called, justified and sanctified. He did this so that they might be sure of their own election and to confirm it in this election of Israel [guilty Israel]. What he was making clear to them was that their election did not depend on their willing and their running, but on God's mercy.

So Paul summoned them to faith as the response that corresponded to their election. In the

face of Israel's guilt Paul stated clearly to Christians that they are what they are by the mercy of God alone. Their present solidarity with Israel is not dissolved, but established, by what was said against Israel.

Lack of faith meant that those who are on the right road to the right destination lost their way. They sought to establish their own righteousness. And this involved them in a rejection of Jesus Christ.

338 - Christ the end [goal] of the law for righteousness to believers.

Romans 10.1-6

The Law of God was never cancelled or put away by Christ. It was the ignorant adoption and application of the law to which Paul objected. It was misused in unbelief - it was against this understanding of Law that Paul set forth the righteousness by faith.

When Paul wrote that Christ "is the end of the Law" he meant Christ is to be understood as the goal of the whole of the Torah. He is the sum of all its demands. He is the one Who interprets it, fulfils it and guarantees its truth and validity. To live under its order is to believe in Him.

So, we cannot oppose the righteousness based on law [10.5] here with the righteousness by faith [10.6]. The first is what Christ did, in that He fulfilled the Law and He lived on that righteousness. The second is what is offered to man in Christ Jesus, and taken into his life by faith in that righteous Man.

339 - Word of God very near in the apostolic preaching of faith.

Romans 10.5-11; Leviticus 18.5; Galatians 3.12; Deuteronomy 30.11-14

It is clear that anyone who sets out to obey the law, desiring to have life through doing that, will have to commit to the doing of the whole law. It will involve them focussing upon their performance [Leviticus 18.5; Galatians 3.12]. Paul calls this a righteousness which issues out of law [ἐκ νόμου].

Paul, drew attention to how the 'righteousness which issues out of faith [ἐκ πίστεως]' speaks. It is as if he asks, 'what does it say of itself?' He recalled how Moses encouraged Israel to obey God by making it clear to the assembled people that the command of God did not have to be fetched, no one needed to go to heaven and bring it down. So the same is true with Christ; no one had to go and bring Christ down. God had sent Him to us.

Neither did anyone have to go down into the abyss to get the word of God; the same is true that no one had to raise Christ from the dead. God had raised Him for us. Nor was the command of God too difficult nor was it out of their reach. The word of God was close to them - it was the word of faith which 'we' - the apostles of Christ - were preaching.

Paul saw that Christ and the Law were in close connection. Christ is the goal and end of the Law - He is its essential meaning and substance. Behind both the gift of the Law and the coming of God in the flesh is the same grace of God - bringing what is necessary within reach of man; His grace in the electing of man in Christ.

This clear identification of "the word" in Deuteronomy 30 with their "preaching" is as clear a statement we can have that Christ is the innermost substance and meaning of the law. It is for the readers of Moses to hear Him of Whom Moses speaks [John 5.46].

340 - To say "Jesus is Lord" is to say that Jesus is God

Romans 10.9-16; Isaiah 28.16; Joel 2.32

Moses taught that the 'mouth' and the 'heart' were the places in humans where the command of God resided [Deuteronomy 30]. Here in Romans 10 the command of God is expressed as a 'heart' belief in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, while in the 'mouth' is the confession that Jesus is Lord. This trust, this heart belief, results in righteousness and this confession is salvation. Anyone who believes on this One will not be disappointed and whoever calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved [Isaiah 28.16; Joel 2].

Those who did not heed the glad tidings nevertheless had heard. It is the message they were hearing preached by the apostles. Paul was the preacher of good tidings and was effective in his apostolic office.

Paul recorded that Isaiah indicated in his day that no-one received his report [Isaiah [53.1]]. This meant that God was the One not heard; for He is the One who is behind the prophet who spoke His word. It was a similar situation for Paul, speaking the word of God in his own day. He did not have power to make the word of God effective. He understood his given authority, that when he spoke it was Christ speaking. So, for Paul, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. It is when people hear Christ, as the preacher preaches, that they have an effective "call".

341 - In proving Israel's guilt Paul clearly affirms their election

Romans 10.18-21; Isaiah 65.2

Paul indicated that the guilt of Israel was substantiated in that they heard [10.18] the preacher; and yet they didn't receive it, because they would not hear [10.16].

By contrast, the Gentiles were seen as foolish people [10.20] who never looked for God and yet were found by Him. This phenomenon occurred when God's voice went out into all the world through the apostolic preaching [10.18]. Paul understood that this state of affairs was to make Israel jealous. For Israel is a nation with revelation, and consequently understanding. But that the foolish 'get it' indicates that it is of God's mercy and not of their ability.

This provocation to jealousy was to be something of Israel's future even though it was not its present perception and motivation [Romans 11.11].

By **10.21** Paul has, in quoting Isaiah 65.2, moved from the question whether Israel understood to the matter of their disobedience and obstinacy, which was attended by God's long suffering, holding out His hands to them.

It was not Israel's failure to hear, or to understand, but its disobedience which was the issue. To this people God is, even now, never weary of caring and showing His loyalty. God is the One who has mercy upon this people. In becoming guilty towards God, Israel genuinely magnifies His faithfulness to her.

342 - Has God abandoned His people? The case of the 7000 with Elijah.

Romans 11.1-10; 1 Kings 19.41; 20.15; 2 Kings 24.16

Paul, arguing from the example of his own life introduced into his letter the prophet, Elijah, and his circumstances. He may have been thinking of a parallel between Elijah's prophetic task and his own apostolic office. As a Benjaminite himself - a tribe which came close to extermination [Judges 20-21] - Paul is a living proof that God has not cast off His people.

Elijah was an example of a man who was left alone. [11.2b-4]. The very isolation of Elijah legitimised the isolation of Paul and his apostolic office as a proof that God has not cast off His people. As the northern kingdom suffered under the weak king Ahab and his manipulative wife Jezebel, Elijah, after the great slaughter of the priests of Baal, fled into the wilderness. Elijah pleaded with God that he was alone [11.3; 1 Kings 19.4] - but the Lord assured him that there were 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But, we might ask, "what do these 7000 show for the whole of Israel"? It is not until we read further that we see they are the whole of Israel - in which case they are not an irrelevant minority [1 Kings 20.15, 2 Kings 24.16].

Romans **11.4** moves the argument of Paul's forward. Speaking of the 7000, he makes it clear that it is God Who has kept them. But Paul adds to the Old Testament text the words, "for Myself". The point is not that there were 7000 men, that is so. But what Paul has in his mind is that God has willed them to be reserved for His own purpose. It was His separation [election] of these men which was the source of them displaying such resolution. The elect in Israel witness to the election of Israel itself because these 7000 men were the whole of Israel - at that time.

Paul asserts that there was a remnant according to the election of grace even at the time of his writing. They are not reserved because they are worthy, loyal, or obedient. It will be according to God's gracious choice, and of course if that is so, then they will be loyal. Paul did not see himself and the other believing Jews of his day [3000 on Pentecost day Acts 2.41, later Acts 4.4 2000 more and then even more Acts 5.14] as being there for any other reason

than they were a remnant chosen by God for His own purpose. And that is why he makes clear that if the remnant is there because of choice of God, then it will be by grace, and not by works - otherwise grace is no longer grace [11.6].

So we learn that God had not cast off His people, for the remnant testify to the very election of Israel, not to their own worthiness or even Israel's worthiness. Indeed, Paul saw himself as not worthy of being an apostle, because he persecuted the house of God [1 Corinthians 15.9]. So God has brought a remnant out of Israel into the Church and with it the realisation of Israel's election itself.

343 - Israel has stumbled but not fallen.

Romans 11.11-15

What Israel sought for, which was righteousness established by her own works, she did not obtain [9.31, 10.3]. But the elect did, of which the example of the 7000 is uppermost to our mind. And the rest of Israel were hardened [11.7c], blinded and deaf [11.8-10].

But this blinding and hardening was not something eternally fixed. For in 10.11 Paul asserts a rhetorical question, "They did not stumble [by which is meant the "rest" of 11.7c], so as to fall, did they?"

For it was through their transgression, which arose out of the hardening, that the salvation came to the Gentiles. And this is, in God's purpose, expressly in order that the "rest" might become jealous and come to conversion. So it cannot mean that they are abandoned, or that they were not also elected as Israel, nor ceased to be so.

344 - The "hardened" Jews the agents of the Gentile salvation

Romans 11.11 -16; Isaiah 2.2-4; 25.6; Jeremiah 3.17; Zechariah 2.11; 8.20f

Gentile Christians, Paul's readers, need to see that this whole state of affairs is a most remarkable fulfilment of Isaiah 2.2-4; 25.6, Jeremiah 3.17, Zechariah 2.11, 8.20f - and this is the presupposition of their own salvation.

If Jesus had not been handed over by the Jews, He would not have been the Saviour of the Gentiles. In that Paul found his message repulsed by the Jews he turned to the Gentiles. God needed the Jews for the sake of the Gentiles - He used their transgression and He hardened them. The Gentiles are not to ask then, whether these hardened Jews are now forsaken. On the contrary, it is clear how well God holds these hardened Jews in His hands. And that He will move them by jealousy. The existence of the Gentiles as receivers of salvation is a summons to these hardened Jews and so a confirmation of their election.

345 - A new offer to the Jews through the Gentile mission and Church?

Throughout his ministry, Paul had defended Gentiles who had been gathered into the Church from being hounded into keeping the less binding issues of the Law. He was clear that the Gentiles did not first have to become Jews in order to enter into God's elect. But that did not mean that he forgot the other side to this ministry, to those who were his kinsmen.

He continued to ask his fellow kinsmen to give up their hardness of heart and repent of resisting the Law and the Messiah. But it was not in this direct appeal to the Jews that he saw the glory of his ministry. That is not where his being an apostle to the Gentiles had its full power.

For the glory of Paul's ministry lay in the fact that, as a messenger of God, he took the gospel first away from Israel to the Gentiles so that it might come back to Israel as a new offer. For, that it now belonged to others did not mean that it ceased to be Israel's possession. The glory of his ministry to the Gentiles was that it involved a new offer to Israel. It is in Israel's future conversion that Paul sees the true glory of his mission to the Gentiles and also the glory of the Gentile church. [Romans 11.12,15]

The Gentile church needed to accept that they were, in some degree, a means to the end of Israel's conversion. This was the whole meaning of Paul's calling and work. It also meant that the Church could understand its own goal only as it understood its unity with Israel. The would really be forsaken of God if God has forsaken Israel.

346 - The first-fruit piece of dough and the root of the olive tree

Romans 11.16-24; Isaiah 11.10; Revelation 5.6; 22.16; Numbers 15.17-21

Paul now states a principle using two images from the Old Testament.

"If the first loaf is holy, so is the whole batch. If the root is holy, so are the branches."[Romans 11.16 REB 1989].

The first image refers to the first kneading of the dough as offered to the Lord [Numbers 15.17-21], although within the Numbers 15 context, the word translated "first loaf" is first fruit [ἡ ἀπαρχή]. The second image is taken from horticulture [although see below]. Consider this quotation,

"Paul's application of the figure of the first-fruit cake has been variously explained. Three main interpretations have been proposed: [i] that Paul refers to the patriarchs; [ii] that he refers to the Jewish Christians; [iii] that he refers to Jesus Christ. In support of [i], which is favoured by very many commentators, it is urged that ἡ ῥίζα [the root] in the latter part of the verse is most naturally taken to refer to the patriarchs

[verse 28] and that ἡ ῥίζα and ἡ ἀπαρχὴ must have the same reference. But ...[for] many others, there seems to be no sufficient reason for assuming that ἡ ῥίζα and ἡ ἀπαρχὴ must have the same application, and, once this is allowed, it is natural to see in the former a reference to the Jewish Christians (cf. Paul's use of ἡ ἀπαρχὴ in 16.5 and 1 Cor. 16.15 of the first converts of a particular area), and to understand Paul's meaning to be that the existence of Jewish Christians serves to sanctify the unbelieving majority in Israel, as the faith of one partner in a marriage sanctifies both the other partner and the children (1 Cor 7.14). This application of the figure of the ἡ ἀπαρχὴ suits the context well, since Paul has spoken of the λείμμα κατ' ἐκλογὴν χάριτος [a remnant according to grace] in vv. 1-10" [Cranfield, (1979) page 564. Translations in brackets mine.]

Although C.E.B. Cranfield [b.1915] opts for [ii] above as the best, the third alternative that Cranfield mentioned above is favoured by Barth [b.1886 d.1968], who recognises that both [i] and [ii] are included in Christ. This would interpret Jesus as the "root of Jesse" [Isaiah 11.10 and the "root of David" [Revelation 5.6; 22.16]. What expresses the holiness of the God of Israel is that He brings Jesus out from this one people, and then makes the whole history of his people hang on Him. Further, we could read that Paul means Jesus, when he uses the expression "root". For, given Paul's audience, the root has to be the One who would be recognised by the church of the Jews and Gentiles; and this alone makes sense of Romans 11.16.

Paul's argument now states a warning and an exhortation to the Gentile Christians. They must never be presumptuous towards the "natural branches" - they must not boast against them. For, contrary to normal gardening practice, what God has done, in the founding of the Church of Jews and Gentiles is a severing of Israel from the tree. Gentiles, at this moment as engrafted aliens, are holding the places of those who have dropped out. This is the great mystery which amazed Paul [Ephesians 3.6]. Yet, those dropped off the tree are not dead. So the Gentile Christians have no ground for boasting over those branches for they only have a place as the others have not.

For the Gentile Christians, the humiliation of the natural branches and the exaltation of the unnatural shoots are both alike difficult to understand.

But the life of the Gentile Christians is carried by the root, they do not carry the tree. The root is a Jewish Man, Jesus Christ, and whoever has Him will not easily reject the Jews. It has to be demanded of Gentile Christians that they approach any Israelite with attention and sympa-

thy.

Gentile Christians should not be high-minded about this. By simply standing in their faith alone, the Gentile believers will be prevented from thinking the unbelieving Jews are forsaken of God. On the other hand, any pride will lead to the anti-Semitic thought of "branches were broken off that I might be grafted in" [11.19]. Thinking like this depicts the Jews as rejected and replaced by the Church, which is then seen as the historical successor of Israel who must be seen as forsaken by God. What such a proud view does not take into account is the resurrection of Jesus - in which God cancelled the rejection of the Jews and also the Jewish rejection of Christ. If God has dealt with the Jewish rebellion so powerfully, He can also do so for the Church if it begins to think as they did.

Because of the resurrection, God is able to graft the Jews in again. Gentile Christians are to abide by the goodness of God that has so amazingly come to them. Without faith they can only fall. They are to be thankful and not cast their eyes to the left or right to compare themselves with others. Gentile Christians are to simply believe, praising the mercy of Him Who elected Israel. They live by the goodness of God: which is His goodness to Israel. They must hope the best for Israel and its members, for the present situation between the Church and Israel is that God can graft in again what He has already cut off.

347 - Fullness of the Gentiles

Romans 11.25-27; Mark 10.31; Luke 13.28ff; 21.24

There is a mystery in all this about which Paul does not want the Gentile Church to be ignorant. There will be an inversion in the order of things. If the gospel is presented to the Jew first and then to the Greek, the coming in of the Greeks is first and then followed by the Jews. The first are to be last and the last first [Mark 10.31]. The children of the household are thrust out as strangers and aliens come and sit down in the Kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob [Luke 13.28ff]. And what corresponds to this on the political stage is that Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. [Luke 21.24].

"All Israel" will then include those who had been cut off when the Gentiles were included. But it will be in such a way as the first shall be last and the last first. This is because only in this way is the deliverance of Israel seen to be an act of divine mercy. It is an act by which the lowly are exalted and the exalted brought low. It is something that happens where there is forgiveness of sins and not the recognition of human "willing" and "running".

The Gentiles come first because in their natural humiliation in relation to the Jews they are given to be exalted as Jesus, the deliverer, comes from Zion. Conversely, the Jews are last, because they are the exalted ones who will be brought low by the Deliverer. This is the mystery to be wondered at by both the Church and the Jews in considering the current relation between them.

348 - The gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

Romans 11.28-36

Judged by their response to the gospel, the Jews are enemies of God – but that is for the Gentiles' sake. The Character of God does not change, and alike for the both groups, there is disobedience and mercy. Gentile ones who were disobedient were shown mercy through the disobedience of the Jews. And then because of the mercy shown to the Gentiles, so there will be mercy shown to them.

It is all of mercy in the midst of disobedience. It is a deep matter - and no-one advises God and no one gives to Him that it might be paid back to him. No one makes God a debtor to himself - it is always so with mercy.

349 - The will of God for changed relationships

Romans 12-15

In the Sermon on the Mount, the King sets our relations to others - we do not. Similarly, in the chapters 12-15 of Romans expresses the will of God for changed relationships. In each case there is an integration between what is believed and what is to be done. The former is the foundation for the latter practice and the exhortations to practice which occupy these chapters each have a reason attached to it.

In chapter 12 we are to offer our bodies to God because of His mercy to us. We are to serve one another because we are one body in Christ. We are not to take revenge because that is something which belongs to God Himself to do.

In chapter 13 we are to submit to the State because it is official and is God's minister wielding His authority. We are to love our neighbour, which is the fulfilling of the Law because the coming of Christ is immanent.

In chapter 14 we are not to harm our brothers and sisters in any way because Christ died to be their Saviour [14.15] and rose to be their Lord [14.9ff] and is coming as Judge [14.11].

350 - Paul's teaching parallels the teaching of Jesus

Romans 13-14

Sometimes it is said that the Pauline gospel is very much Paul, and not so much Jesus. Here we present in the Romans 13 and 14 where, as disciples of Christ, we notice how the teaching derives from Jesus.

Paul encourages us to bless our persecutors [Romans 12.14; Luke 6.28]. We are not to repay evil for evil [Romans 12.17; Matthew 5.29]. If we find our enemy hungry, we are to feed him [Romans 12.20; Luke 6.27,35; Matthew 5.44]. We are to give to everyone what we owe them

[Romans 13.7; Mark 12.14,17]. We are to love one another [Romans 13.8; John 13.34ff]. To love our fellow man is to fulfil the law [Romans 13.8; Matthew 22.37ff]. We are to love our neighbour as ourselves [Romans 13.9; Matthew 7.12] We are to understand the present times in which we live [Romans 13.11; Luke 12.56]. We are to wake from slumber [Romans 13.13b; Mark 13.36, Luke 21.28] We are not to judge our brother [Romans 14.10,13; Matthew 7.1] We shall each give an account to God [Romans 14.12; Matthew 12.36] We are not to put stumbling blocks in each other's way [Romans 14.13; Matthew 18.7] No food is unclean in itself [Romans 14.14,20; Matthew 15.10, Mark 7.19] The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit [Romans 14.17; Matthew 6.25,33].

2 - Powerful emotional motivators within us

351 - Authentic responses

Living in relationship with God has taught us that the initiative for all our exchanges lies with Him. He makes the first moves. He is the origin of our life, both in our creation as well as in our redemption. In this setting, we are simply called to respond. Being in relationship with such a God as we have, means that our responses can only be authentic as they satisfy Him who looks deep into our hearts - as the Word of God He pierces to the dividing of our very soul from our spirit [Hebrews 4.12].

It is also true for ourselves. Our responses are true and wholly authentic to ourselves only as He sees them as issuing from our hearts. What this comes to mean is that as He judges our heart to be authentic, there is a corresponding echo within ourselves. We are beginning to learn a new inner wholeness which reflects His view of our inner being.

352 - Liberty of Sonship

This is the fundamental reason why our responses to God are "free" in the truest sense. It is because He has drawn them from us by the beauty of His own character that for the first time, we respond in a way which is uninhibited by our own selfish concerns.

It is a liberty which is only known in responding to Someone, who is and has shown Himself to be so true, so right and so pure that we are convinced of His trustworthiness and believe He is selflessly always acting for our best welfare, according to how he sees it and not as we do.

This "free response" then comes to mean a liberty from ourselves. But it is liberty only known "in relationship" with Him; for the situation of reciprocal exchange, into which He has drawn us, is the only dynamic setting in which such "freedom" can be known. If He is not there "for

us" then we are left to ourselves, abandoned to our own deep fatherless, orphaned bondage.

353 – Evoked, emotional responses make for inner freedom

Because we live in a relationship of union, our inner responses are motivated and enlivened by the person to whom we are relating. This is firstly true with God and, because it is central to God's life, it is also the case in human life, which is made in God's image. He is drawing us to be like Him.

It follows from this that as we are drawn to be open in relationship to the Lord, we shall find that there are emotional responses to Him that are evoked within us as we encounter His own self giving of Himself to us, as He reveals Who He is and What He does.

Such a relational setting as this powerfully affects our emotional response to God and our motivation for why and how we do things.

In our series of Units so far, we have already found the deep motivational well-spring of our life actively responding to the open revelation that God has brought us of Himself. Building upon the first seven Units, we can see how this relational context of union with Christ, in which we find ourselves, has a powerful impact upon the inner life of our soul – it is the setting for an inner wholeness which is being registered within our mind, will and emotions.

Such is the "freedom" from ourselves that we have entered, we now begin to see ourselves in a different way.

[1] We are drawn by the self-giving, holy love of God that goes out from Him towards us. We accept that holy love is preferential. Not as viewed from some comparison with others but, as viewed from God's own choices, we see that to be elected people of God is entirely satisfying and assuring of our position with God. His choice of us settles our inner being and anchors us in a way that is not dependent on our ourselves.

We hold onto this by faith, in the face of our own self-centred view of equality and fairness. A view often derived from and confirmed in our culture from the Greek idea of democracy - of government of the people by the people for the people.

And we also hold to this wonderful election of God in the face of our own self-congratulation that we, as if by our own acceptance of the invitation of God's outgoing love, could somehow become sure of ourselves because of a decision or response that we have made.

[2] We are drawn by the self-giving humility of God, Who for our sakes and out of His own sovereign free will, laid aside His glory and became man. He entered our world through taking of sinful flesh and then voluntarily stood with us in our deep bondage to sin, death and ourselves. That such a great Father God would express His outgoing heart in such a way as to send His Son to die for us, at such an entire cost to Himself, evokes from us a response to His love.

We are moved to receive His love for us and to take to heart Jesus his Son our Saviour, who has taken such steps to know our humanity from the inside, as it were. We respond to such costly, outgoing love that took such an initiative to enter our weakness and helplessness. Such a seeking Father, who has sent His only Son for us, draws from us a recognition that we are of a value that He alone knows. But it is His value of us, in His sight, that has now evoked a proper value of ourselves within ourselves. We have learned to see ourselves through His eyes as He convinces us we matter to Him.

We hold all this in the face of, and despite, our dishonoured view of ourselves and our fellow men; despite our low and depressed estimate of humanity and the human life. Our former sense of being abandoned by God is overwhelmed by the inner sense of knowing God as our dear Father, who has come to us through the revelation of His heart for us made through and in His Son.

[3] We are drawn by the humiliating and shameful death of Christ to see His wonderful suffering obedience offered to the Father, while at the same time, we see our own demise and just deserts laid out before our eyes. We are awed by this judgment of a holy Father upon sin. We are agog at the internal consistency of His character to so deal with our sin as such a serious matter and at such cost. We learn things about our sin and rebellion from God's side, which makes us ashamed of ourselves in relation to Him as our loving Creator. We begin to grasp His inner Holiness.

[4] We are drawn to receive our forgiveness as the true basis of our Redeemer's new covenant with us. Such an openness is generated in our hearts that we cease to be secretive out of fear of punishment and freely confess our sins to God. We empty out before Him our shameful thoughts, words we have said and deeds done. We are drawn freely to do this by His assurance that He is not counting them against us.

Set free from fearing what He can do to us, we have learned a new fear of our Father which has arisen through our forgiveness – the fear to further hurt such a loving heart of such a self-giving person. We fear to treat Him as a door-mat or abuse his forgiveness.

It is this sort of fear that is lodged in our heart, which now motivates us to a godly life driven by a responsive love.

[5] We are drawn to accept the inner peace with God, which is the experience of reconciliation. Our inner conscience has been set at rest about our failures and sin. This affects our emotional life. It confirms that our trust is well placed and so settles our emotions in the face of, and despite, the accusations of the devil, the disturbance that can arise when we sin, or when others accuse us, often rightly, of our failings.

[6] We are glad to accept His statement of us as justified in the Saviour. As we trust this verdict, this declaration, it takes away from us any fear to approach God. It gives us, in union with Christ an access into the relationship with the Holy Father. We are acceptable in the

Beloved.

We emotionally hold this inner view in the face of, and despite the fact that we sin and fall over. We dare to hold to it as we live in the tension of not yet entering into, but waiting for, the redemption of our bodies.

354 – Being drawn to respond, we cannot directly control emotions.

A key to understanding our emotional life is that we cannot directly control our emotions. It is not so much that our emotions are passive as they are responsive to: (a) external situations of life around us; (b) the interactions with other people which evoke from us an emotional response; (c) what is presented to our minds by others to think about and which we decide to dwell on (d) what we present to our own mind.

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and anything worthy of praise let your mind dwell on these.” Philippians 4.8

So, our emotions respond to revelation and this is why, particularly with the Word of God, great changes are worked in our emotional responses when we dwell on, receive, believe and interact with God on the basis of what He has shown.

3 - Consecration motivated by God's mercy

355 – Mercy as a primary motivator of the consecrated life

The ground upon which we consecrate ourselves to God is the knowledge of His mercy. As we have seen, mercy is the key word throughout the extensive argument of Romans 9-11 [Romans 9.16, 23; 11.30, 32]. But it is equally true, that the whole of Romans has been dealing with the mercies of God, from His election of us in Christ before creation and the sending of God's own Son to take flesh “for us” and for our salvation. The section 12.1-2 introduces the section of 12.1-15.13.

“1 I exhort you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God to present yourselves as a sacrifice living, holy and well-pleasing to God, which is your understanding worship. 2 And stop allowing yourselves to be conformed to this age, but continue to let yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is the will of God, that which is good and well-pleasing and perfect.” (Cranfield, 1979) volume 2, page 595

The “therefore” of 12.1 indicates that the whole of the Christian response of the obedience of faith is grounded in the overwhelming mercy of God. And this must mean that one of the most powerful motivations of the Christian life is gratitude for the way God has dealt with us

in Christ. The "therefore" points us to all that has been said in Romans 9-11 in particular, but really going all the way back to the beginning of the letter. For what we have been dealing with there is mercy expressed under other words such as "kindness", "patience", "love" and "grace". It is the argument of the whole letter that reaches us in this "therefore". The indebtedness to the mercy of God is the grounds for the appeal to live out the obligations of grace.

"We work from, not for salvation. Morality needs a dynamic. Conduct requires a power behind it. This is found in the mercies of God in that Gospel which is the "the power of God unto salvation" (Griffith-Thomas, 1946) page 324

"Paul's entreaty teaches us that men will never worship God with a sincere heart, or be roused to fear and obey Him with sufficient zeal, until they properly understand how much they are indebted to His mercy. Paul...in order to bind us to God not by servile fear but by a voluntary and cheerful love of righteousness, attracts us by the sweetness of that grace in which our salvation consists." Calvin, (1539, 1948) page 263

356 – It is total offering, involving a surrendering of our whole selves

"I exhort you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living victim..." (Godet, 1883, 1977) page 424

We are to offer our bodies, but not our bodies in the sense – as Calvin put it – of just our 'skin and bone'. The body is the instrument of the inner life, as Romans 6-8 makes clear. So our whole self, body, soul and spirit is involved - "present yourselves" [Romans 6.13]. The Christian faith really values the body, for it is after all a faith centred in the Incarnation of the Word of God. We are not caught up in that dualism which sees the body as evil and purely materialistic and so not worth regarding. It is through the body that the entire life of a person is manifested.

357 – It is a sacrificial offering

And it is the offering of a sacrifice. Sacrifice can be used, as in English, to mean the thing offered or the act of sacrificing. It is the first here as is confirmed by the adjective "living". Discussing the opening section of Romans 12, Godet makes the setting for understanding this consecrating act very clear.

"... Jewish service counted four kinds of sacrifice, which might be reduced to two: the first, comprising the sacrifices offered before reconciliation and to obtain it (sacrifice

for sin and for trespass); the second, the sacrifices offered after the obtaining of reconciliation and serving to celebrate it (the whole burnt-offering and the peace-offering). The great division of the Epistle to the Romans...is explained by this contrast. The fundamental idea of the first part, chaps.i-xi., was that of sacrifice offered by God for the sin and transgression of mankind; witness the central passage, iii.25 and 26. These are the mercies of God to which Paul appeals here, and the development of which has filled the first eleven chapters. The practical part that we are beginning corresponds to the second kind of sacrifice, which was the symbol of consecration after pardon had been received (the holocaust, in which the victim was entirely burned), and of the communion re-established between Jehovah and the believer (the peace-offering, followed by the feast in the court of the temple). The sacrifice of expiation offered by God in the person of His Son should now find its response in the believer in the sacrifice of complete consecration and intimate communion." Godet, (1883,1977) page 424-5.

And just as the offered victim passes to become the property of God so there is a surrender of ourselves here - we are no longer in our own power, but have passed into the power of God. We have been treated as God's, purchased for Him, and now we are to self-surrender to Him by our own free will. It is a self-surrender which is to be continually repeated moment-by-moment.

This sacrifice is to be "living" in the sense that it has new life, which is itself a work of God in the Christian. It is said to be "holy" because the Christian life is continually to be marked by increasing holiness as the progress of sanctification goes forward. It is described as "pleasing to God" because it is a sacrifice which is true and proper in that it is desired by God and therefore He will accept it. The offering of yourself has a certainty of reception by Him.

358 – It is practical and rational, a reasonable service of worship

This offering of oneself is to be "reasonable worship". The sort of service that may be offered to God is not disconnected from the continuous affairs of everyday life. It is reasonable because it is in harmony with the true understanding of the truth of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Worship means to ascribe "worthship"; it is what is offered to God because we know His worth, and indicates that we have received Him for who He is. So, our worship is our

response to His Person, learned from His own self-revelation, as we know Him to be. We worship in "spirit and truth" [John 4.22-24]. We accept the revelation which He offers as true, and trust His word. We respond in a way that reflects His worth and leads to an obedience which is worship. That is, it is obedience responsively offered back to Him because it knows His worth.

What this must be is "rational". For it has to do with our mind, in its conviction about the nature and Person of God. As we think of Him, so we respond to Him. There is no dodging around the mind here - our mind matters. It is the instrument of our soul that integrates and sensibly orchestrates all that we do through our consecrated living.

359 – The demands of consecration: negative and positive

See Boan, 2013, Responding, #310-314

In the light of the "mercies of God", consecrated Christians are to stop allowing themselves to be conformed to this age with its patterns, conventions and values. Rather, the calling is to be transformed. This transformation is not brought about in an instant, it is continually being repeated, as each matter of life is dealt with by the resisting of the age and allowing the transforming process to go on. We are continually going forward into an increasing conformity to Christ.

How this transformation is brought about is "by the renewing of the mind". Romans 7-8 has shown us already that Paul does not think that this is something which he expects his readers to bring about for themselves. It is the Spirit's work [Romans 7.6] - the Christian is a responsible sharer in this matter, yielding himself freely to the leading of the Spirit.

This renewal of the mind brings about the moral disposition needed for the discerning of the will of God. The mind needs to be renewed to embrace and accept the will of God. And, insofar that it is the mind, it emphasises the freedom of the response given. It is also an integral response of the whole person; for it will have arisen consistent with the inner convictions of the Christian. There is no disconnection between what we think of God and what we offer Him as our worship.

360 – Resisting conforming pressures

Concerning the external life around us and our own internal bias, we are encouraged to understand the world (the age in which we live), the flesh drives of our bodily life and the devil to be three sources of pressure upon our lives.

Romans 12.2 "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is that which is good, acceptable and perfect."

(1) We are not to be moulded by this age in which we live. All around us there is a "world" – to use the language of John's Gospel – which is hostile to the Saviour as He took out of the world those whom His Father gave Him. They were born of God, and so they do not have their origin from the world – they are not of its kind. Those who are not "of" the world, are sent back into the world to live among those not yet called "out" from it. And so they are under the pressure of its conforming influence which must be resisted [1 John 4.1-6; 5.4-5].

(2) The resistance, offered to this conforming pressure, turns upon yielding to the transformation of our minds by God. This renewing of our minds is for a reason. It is designed to allow us to prove (put to the test, try by practice) the will of God, a will that is good, acceptable and perfect (mature). This implies that resistance to the conforming world is by a discriminating renewed mind – we have been given to think differently; we know what the good, acceptable and mature things are to do.

(3) Notice we do not have to try to have a mature mind. The verb "be transformed" is in the passive voice. A renewed mind is a work of God and we need trust Him to do it, and then to yield to Him as He does it. The decision of our renewed minds is to be about the will of God Himself. This makes what we think about, and our desires, to be what He wants - the good, acceptable and mature things.

(4) The content of our minds are to be true things - whatever are venerable, pure, endearing, of good report, virtue praise - these are to be our treasures.

361 – Effects of consecration: the will of God known, done and enjoyed

In the old manner of our life, Romans 1 informed us, this mind of ours was darkened as a result of its suppression of the truth; it had become futile and empty. The outward form of the world's pressure upon its renewed state is now being resisted.

As we take to ourselves the word of God that we are forgiven, reconciled and justified persons, we find that our conscience settles with this truth. Our spirit finds itself confirmed by the Holy Spirit, that we are children of God [Romans 8.16]. The rest that the gospel brings to our conscience has a profound affect upon our heart and so also our mind.

"...let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Hebrews 10.22

As our conscience is no longer an evil one, it has the effect of cleansing our hearts, and so our mind, which is a function of the heart.

What Romans 12.1-2 tells us, is that as we are being transformed and our mind is being renewed. If it is our conscience that registers the life and mood of the Spirit within us; it is our constantly-being-transformed mind that is our moral centre of life that is to be informed, to think and rationally comprehend what the will of God is.

As the will of God can be known in this way, it may be proved. That is, it may be experientially done, and so put to the test of life. When this is done, it is known in experience as something well pleasing to the Lord, which generates in us the awareness of joy at having pleased Him. And it is right, perfect, mature.

362 – Holy Living: its basis, its method and its outcome.

[1] The basis of holy living is revelation of grace and mercy. The sustained argument of Romans, and that of the New Testament is that it is the revelation of God which has become the basis for all that we know of God. This is what informs our responses to Him. We have seen this re-iterated in many ways. We have seen the importance of getting the order of the "gift" before the "task" in the Christian life. We have noticed the emphasis of God as a Father who draws us into a filial relation with Himself and so extends us the liberty of Sonship as the basis upon which we act and respond to Him.

[2] The way of a holy life is consecration

As we know the revelation of what God has done for us, our souls are filled with thankfulness, gratitude for God's mercy upon us. The translation of 1 Chronicles 29.5 reads '...Now who is willing to give with open hand to the Lord today?' in the Revised English Bible. But in the older English versions it reads, "...Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day to the Lord" [AV]. Using both translations presents us with the picture of the Hebrew word for consecrate: it literally means to 'fill the hand'. So to consecrate ourselves is to come to God with hands full, ready for service to Him, with every faculty offered to be used by God.

[3] The outcome is transformation.

Many Christians are pre-occupied with their Christian growth. Our text, Romans 12.1-2, does not speak to us of growth, as if to suggest further progress along lines that have already been laid down, but of transformation, which indicates change. While our Lord, in His infancy and adolescence is said to have grown, He is never said to have been transformed [Luke 2.52]. This is because there was nothing in his character that required alteration. With every stage of His growth, it was full and perfect.

With us it is very different. If we may be said to require growth it will always be growth which is transformation into His likeness - an ever-increasing conformity to Him. Our text of Romans 12.1-2 has focussed our attention upon the transformation process as a matter of inner renewal. The mind of Christ is ours, by union and appropriated by faith [1 Corinthians 2.16]. While we often view ourselves as marred and with many sins, yet we never lose sight of the hope that we shall be "like Him" and see Him face to face. So we are not to be neurotic, or anxious about growing in the Christian life. Rather, we are to be intentionally consecrating ourselves, our souls and bodies, as living, acceptable and holy sacrifices to God.

363 - having a "right view" of yourselves in relation to others.

Romans 12.3-8

Paul states that we must not have a presumptuous, over-reaching view of ourselves. We are not to range in our thinking beyond the limits of the amount of faith God has given us. We are not to estimate ourselves too highly, but to have a sober estimate.

The "measure of faith" here will not mean the comparative measure of one man's faith as against another's, but the common measure which all Christians each have in the dependence upon Jesus Christ. To measure yourselves by yourselves, or against others is to lack understanding [2 Corinthians 10.12]. This is consistent to what we see in Romans 12.1-2 where the renewing of the mind enables one to test and discern things as God sees them.

Also, the believer is not to measure himself against his feelings, but according to his faith - ie his God-given relation to the Lord. It is the one upon Whom he believes who controls the right perception of oneself.

"For just as we have many members" - the "for" makes clear that the issue of the discernment of what we are to do in the body of Christ is integral to the right understanding of oneself.

We also need a right understanding of our faith in regard to the gift we bring to the service of one another. Not everyone has the same function. Corresponding to that, there are differing gifts according to the grace given us.

4 - Followers of the once crucified Rabbi

364 – Called as disciples of Jesus to share together the life of the Rabbi

The Greek word for a disciple [μαθητής] means a learner. But a learner in the sense of one who is a follower-in-life. He learns by sharing the life of his rabbi. He walks in the paths the rabbi walks.

The Aramaic word for a teacher is rabbi. But it means a teacher in the sense of a leader-in-life together. It is a situation where not only "content" or "ideas" are taught, but where the life of the leader is a pattern for living. Further, by "pattern" we don't mean doing what the leader does, in the simpler sense of copying His deeds, but becoming like Him as persons.

When Jesus came, there were many young learners of the Scriptures who sought for a rabbi to follow. They presented themselves to their rabbi of choice, to convince him that he should take them on. He examined them to see if they were suitable and learned and so would convey his interpretation of the Scriptures adequately and bring him honour as they passed on his traditions.

The fishermen of the Galilean region would not have seen themselves as able to qualify, and so would never have applied to follow a rabbi. Jesus' gracious initiative was to call them to follow Him. In the times in which they lived, they would have been overwhelmed with honour. They left their nets or previous occupations and followed Him.

365 – Called to life together on the same basis - God's grace to sinners.

Matthew 9.9-13// Mark 2.13-17
Luke 5.1-11

It was a gracious call. It made it clear that God was seeking them with the outgoing love of Father, which was done through the Son and by the Spirit.

There were no prior conditions for these called disciples to fulfil, so as to be worthy of their rabbi. In fact, a study of the call of Levi [Matthew 9.9-13// Mark 2.13-17] and the call of Peter [Luke 5.1-11] makes clear that the only condition they had to fulfil was that they were sinners.

366 – Life together to "learn Jesus", in the sense of 'to be like Him'

Ephesians 4.20; Matt 11.25-30; Luke 11.42-54; Matthew 23; Revelation 17.3-8

ἀκολουθέω is the verb meaning "I follow"; and it pictures simply to go after or behind someone. The New Testament only uses the verb, or the expression "come after me"; it never uses the noun "follower". In this way, it draws our attention to the action, the movement involved in following. It never presents us some general concept.

The disciples discovered in Jesus a deep contrast with the other rabbis, who set heavy burdens on their followers and offered no help to bear what they had put on them [Matthew 23]. When Jesus told them to "take my yoke" His disciples were to find that it was to learn of Him; it was a yoke that was lived out as his own before it was theirs.

[1] The yoke of restfulness, humility and lowliness

They were to "learn Christ" [Ephesians 4.20], to know that He was lowly of heart. They would find in the humility of Christ a rest for their souls - a wonderful release from striving - for His yoke was easy and His burden was light.

At the creation of the world God had laboured for six days and then rested on the seventh. All his work had set up for Adam and Eve a world, a garden, a place which they were then to simply enter and occupy. It was their entry into the work of God. They were to benefit from God's labour on their behalf. It was unmistakable that the world made by God was made 'for them'.

Adam and Eve, themselves works of God creation, would enter into the "work" of God. For the

creation was not an extension of God's nature, in some pantheistic way. Jesus, as God's own Son had entered into that created world taking our sinful flesh as the God-man. In the world, He does what He does for our sakes. Jesus' yoke would bring his disciples to "rest" in their life. It would bring them to a sabbath rest, the "rest" that God took. In Jesus they had an entry into not some work of God where He was separate from them, but into the shared life of God as He had drawn near to them in His Son. The call to "follow" would introduce them to a Saviour, who worked for them in their place and in their stead.

This was in sharp contrast to the climate of the boot camp and burden of other rabbis whom men followed. They brought a self-imposed discipline and a sharp emphasis on qualification before entry could be gained to the rabbi's group. They were self-seeking in their love of places of honour and the respectful greetings other men and women gave them.

[2] It was a yoke that would change them, renewing their life

It would lead them to a change of heart and internal renovation through receiving a revelation of the Father by the Son. It would lead to a participation in God's life through sharing in the Rabbi's life; for they would come to see Him as Son of God. This was again, in vivid contrast to the Pharisees and the scribes, who were blind guides, lacking spiritual discernment, and who dealt in externals of religion and did not penetrate to the issues of the heart.

[3] It was a yoke of true knowledge of God mediated by His Son

It would lead them to a reliable, true and authentic revelation of God. It would be a direct word to them, mediated by the very Son of God as man. All this strikes a contrast to the scribes and Pharisees, who were self appointed, human mediators of man's tradition.

[4] It would set them free for the Word of God over the traditions of men

To learn of the authority of Jesus, their Rabbi, was to know that "no man spoke like this one". They found themselves clinging to Him because He had the Words of life and was the very Word of God Himself. Other rabbis were simply proselytisers, peddlers of their own viewpoint, adding to the traditions of men rather than bringing the Word of God.

[5] It would free them for humble life together

On the basis of their common life together they were all brothers. They had been called into this relationship through the Rabbi's call, which was the call of God. The superiority of their Rabbi as their teacher was that He set the basis for humble life together, where they would call no man among their fellowship a rabbi or their teacher. For they knew that there was one Rabbi and they were all brothers.

[6] It was a yoke that led to purity of heart.

To 'learn Christ' - to share in his life and work for them - would leave them clean on the inside. It would therefore set them free to recognise religion for what it was, a "leaven" – a

defilement - of the Pharisees that dirties up the inner man while practising the deception of keeping the externals of life looking "clean".

[7] It would lead them to life.

Their Rabbi was a bringer of life. In following Jesus, they did not find themselves caught up in the murders and blood-shedding of the scribes and Pharisees. Religion led to such murders [Matthew 23.29-36].

367 - Called to the life together to be hated by outsiders as He was

Matt 10.24-5

Jesus forewarned His disciples as a group that it was enough for a disciple to be as his teacher. In this way, He made it clear to them that as they were called to be like Him And to share his life was also to share in the reactions that other men and women adopted towards Him. The rejection and disapproval that people brought to Him they would also bring to His disciples.

This was an aspect of shared life that meant the disciples would know persecution. To take up His yoke would mean that they could not hide from the world as His witnesses – that would be to deny Him.

368 – Called to a life together in which each person "denies" himself

Mark 14.68//Acts 3.13, 2 Peter 2.21, 1 John 2.22, John 1.20

The word, ἀρνέω, means "I renounce", in the sense of to withdraw from, or to annul an existing obedience and loyalty [Mark 14.68//Acts 3.13, 2 Peter 2.21, 1 John 2.22, John 1.20]. It is the opposite of the word ὁμολογέω "I confess". To confess a person is where a man stands in a relationship of obedience and loyalty to someone, declaring that allegiance before others. [Mark 8.36, 10.33 compared with 2 Tim 2.12, Rev 3.8, 2/13 Mark 8.34 Matt 26.72].

Jesus, in a stark setting of crucifixion, taught that his followers should deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. This denial of yourself is an attitude, taken concerning your own person, in the first place before the Lord. It means that we no longer see ourselves as worth defending; we have given up on our own self-justification; we have given up on standing for our own worth and honour. We have no grounds within ourselves to be loyal to ourselves.

It is not a putting down of oneself, but a decision to not self-justify in the place of knowing that God has already done it for us in Christ. It is a command of the Lord which we can now attempt because we have already received the gift of self freedom. It follows from being freed from ourselves.

It has the result that finds expression in the community of considering the needs of others

as more important than one's own. The place of the disciple of the Lord in the community is derived from a prior matter in relationship to the Lord. It is the Lord who commands this attitude. It is not a requirement of the community or others. It is something a person decides before the Lord *before* he embraces the community.

369 – Called to a life together where the death of self is embraced

After the disciples realised who He was, Jesus' constant emphasis in His private teaching to them was about *the taking up of their own cross*. He spoke of how they would undergo the baptism which He would. They would come to share in His death. The image of "taking up" the cross has its origins in the public execution method, where the criminal was made to carry the cross beam to the place of crucifixion or, as was sometimes the case, of fixing his arms to it and then he would walk there, to be hoisted up.

So, when Jesus speaks of "taking up" your cross He is indicating [a] the acceptance of a voluntary death for yourself; [b] that you are active in this infliction of death, you play your part and walk to the place knowing what you are doing; [c] that you are not coming back - men who were crucified never did. It was a final thing, a finished matter. As we shall see, it is final, not so much as a once-off event, but as a final and fixed attitude that is constantly practised.

[1] *The taking up of the cross means that we have decided against saving our life. We are content to lose it [Matthew 16.21-27].*

The negative reaction of Peter to the prophetic statement of Jesus that he, himself, would suffer and be killed was met by a strong perception, in the spirit of Jesus. Jesus understood that, at that time, it was Satan speaking to him through Peter. And Satan does speak, in these extreme moments, through those who mind the things of men against the things of God.

Every man is set to preserve his life. Jesus speaks against this. As He understands it, a man is wanting to preserve his life as the world teaches him it may be preserved. He simply invites the person to consider as an alternative, - and certainly not as suicide - that the way to preserve his life [as God understands that] is to lose it [according to the world's estimation].

To deny yourself and take up your cross is simply to acknowledge, by practical living, a new perception which God has brought you. That is, to be the minding of the things of God, and to hang on in faith while doing that. For minding the things of men will actually bring about the forfeiting of the person's life.

We understand the word "soul" used here for the general meaning life, but there may also be a facet of denying the soulish sensual area of life. One of the ways we certainly find in experience is that the soul life, which the word of God 'separates' for us from the spirit [Heb.4.12], must often be denied in the discernment of spiritual matters. This is going to be quite important in practice.

[2] The taking up of the cross is adopted "for Jesus' sake" and also for "the gospel's sake"
Mark 8.34-35

The bringing of the good news to people is something which will involve us in the denial of ourselves. The preachers and bringers of the good news of Jesus are those who have settled the matter of the cost of bringing it. This we have already seen in the preaching of Paul, for it not only meant a physical danger for him to preach, it also meant that his academic reputation as the learned Jew was left behind as well. [1 Cor.1]

[3] The taking up of the cross is something which is always done daily Luke 9.23-27

This speaks of continually conforming to the cross life. Jesus is here signalling that this is not a decision which, once taken, is then finished. It is enacted daily in the lives of His children. To follow the Messiah then, means that he is promising that, everyday, there will be some issue which will require of us a "dying to self". Once again, we cannot trade upon a crisis experience only, although there will always be such times. We need to resolutely adopt this attitude daily.

370 – A life together putting the Lord before other persons and things

Luke 14.25-34 ; Matthew 10.32-39; Luke 14.26,27,33

[1] Placing our Lord ahead of family ties [Luke 14.25-34 ;Matthew 10.32-39].

In the Luke 14.25-34 Jesus challenges those who desire to follow him whether they have understood what it will cost.

In verse 26, speaking of dying to the ties of the family and the hating even of one's own life Jesus exemplifies what is required. The expression "hatred" is used here for sharp contrast; because people normally love and cleave to their family. So, anyone who wants to follow him must be prepared for circumstances where choices between family and Christ will come. The Matthew 10.32-39 text illustrates the same truth from the aspect of not "denying" Jesus. The pressures which the family can bring to bear are the greatest in a person's life.

In the Gospel records, it is the cost of the task of following Jesus is brought home. To follow here means the constant, day by day, sticking with Jesus and the demands of the kingdom. That is why the parable of the "tower builder" asks the simple question, "Estimate the cost and see if you have enough to complete what you have committed!"

[2] Each has counted the cost

The parable of the delegation to the warring king, asks that we have a realistic understanding of the overwhelming nature of the task which we meet in following Jesus Luke 14.25-33]. But there is more than this in the parable. Understanding that he has no hope of meeting the odds against him, the man in the parable sends a delegation to ask for terms of peace. In other words, the story asks that we add up the cost of discipleship fully aware that it cannot

be done without the possible loss of all that we have, which means that we shall keep following only at the cost of everything else. The would-be disciple is invited to picture himself as a person besieged by a greater opponent, having a greater claim on his life than he has. He is about to live under this conquering master. He is now asked to render up all if that is required. Whatever the terms of peace that are to be set!

[3] Things

"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple" [Luke 14.33 emphasis mine].

What is understood by this "cannot"? First, we need to distinguish between "may not" and "cannot" in English usage. In the Greek text the translation is "is not able to be my disciple". Jesus is not placing a condition on the offer of discipleship. As if He were saying "I will not offer you the possibility of even following me unless you give up all that you have and are". He is not stating a pre-requisite for the offer of discipleship.

Rather, he is saying that the person who is contemplating the free offer of discipleship, needs to understand that the cost of actually doing so is high. They will not be able to carry out the action of following Him unless they have taken up their cross and settled that matter beforehand.

So this "cannot" is designed to protect the follower. A person who is considering following Jesus is being advised that he may see the cost mounting, and he may find that he cannot go on. Jesus is making a clear offer, in an honest way. The cost of being a disciple is the same cost for the follower as it was for the Teacher and the Master. [Luke 14.26,27,33]

5 - Disciples of the submitted, 'servant' Rabbi

371 - Submission demonstrated in the Godhead of the Trinity

To understand the way to live we are wise to look at the life of our God. For, as we know, we are made in His image; we are meant to be like Him and He is taking us to that goal.

We have seen how Jesus Christ is the Prophet, Priest and King. We have examined the Holy Spirit's work within us. As we study the Trinity of Persons within the Godhead, we want to see how they relate to One Another. In this way, we can move immediately from observation to practice in expression of love for one another. For, in all Their operations with Each Other - as the Scriptures reveal Them in action for us - it can be said that "God is love" (1 John 4.16).

372 - Statements: "form of the servant" & "form of the Son of God".

As this section involves a study in John's Gospel, we need to understand the way to read certain statements made concerning Jesus' understanding of Himself in respect of the Father, and also in respect of His understanding of Himself.

The Gospels record the Word of God coming as man, without ceasing to be God. With this in mind, we need to read with care. And as a starting point we begin with a distinction found in the letter of Paul to the Philippians.

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men." (Philippians 2.5-7. ASV)

Augustine [b.354:d.430 AD] was bishop of Hippo Regius, of ancient Carthage, in Northern Africa. He wanted to understand how to read about Jesus Christ Who is man and God. In his book "On the Trinity" (*De Trinitate*) Augustine uses the above passage from Paul to show that the Logos, the eternal Word of God, when He took on Himself the "form of the servant" did not lay aside the "form of God". Augustine understood the "emptying" to be the humbling of the divine by its union with the human. He didn't mean that Christ Jesus entirely divested Himself of the divinity, nor even that in the humiliation there was a total non-use of it. This is to be remembered as we consider the following excerpt:

"... on account of the incarnation of the Word of God for the working out of our salvation, that the man Christ Jesus might be the Mediator between God and men, many things are so said in the sacred books as to signify, or even most expressly declare, the Father to be greater than the Son; men have erred through a want of careful examination or consideration of the whole tenor of the Scriptures, and have endeavored to transfer those things which are said of Jesus Christ according to the flesh, to the substance of His which was eternal before the incarnation, and is eternal.

They say, for instance, that the Son is less than the Father, because it is written that the Lord Himself said, 'My Father is greater than I' (John 14.28). But the truth shows that after the same sense the Son is less also than Himself, who 'emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant'? For He did not so take the form of a servant as that He should lose the form of God, in which He was equal to the Father. If, then, the form of the servant was so taken that the form of

God was not lost, since both in the form of a servant and in the form of God He Himself is the same only-begotten Son of God the Father; in the form of God equal to the Father; in the form of a servant the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; is there anyone who cannot perceive that He Himself in the form of God is also greater than Himself, but yet likewise in the form of a servant less than Himself? And not therefore, without cause the Scripture says both the one and the other, both that the Son is equal to the Father, and that the Father is greater than the Son. For there is no confusion when the former is understood on account of the form of God, and the latter as on account of the form of the servant." Augustine, *De Trinitate*: Book 1, chapter 7.

This perspective is helpful. It also helps to clarify our understanding of Jesus as the Prophet. What Jesus said in respect of Himself and the Father, not only demonstrates His submission as a careful Prophet - giving us what the Father said - it also takes us a little deeper. We now see that the submission of the Word of God is involved in the very Incarnation, and that His preaching concerning His own Person, needed to also express the truth within the place of humiliation the incarnate word of God was found.

373 - The Submission of the Son to The Father

Gospel of John

As we take a journey through the Gospel of John we shall see that Jesus' authority over us is based on the fact that He himself is **submitted to the Father**.

1.14 We learn that Jesus is "begotten" of the Father. Here His subordination to the Father is clearly stated. Yet, such a statement becomes the basis for Him to be able to "reveal" the Father (1.18).

1.30 Lest you thought that Jesus was only a man who had an authority which any man could have - then the statement of John emphasizes that He is pre-existent.

2.4 Jesus was submitted to the "programme" of the Father. His expression to Mary, his mother, was "my hour has not yet come" - in this respect, He would not be drawn out of His hour and time, set by His Father.

3.26-30 John the Baptist indicates a spiritual principle which is the same principle which Jesus used for the test of His own ministry - "A man can receive nothing, unless it is given to him from heaven".

4.21-24 Here Jesus speaks of the worship of the "Father". He is content to express the Father's

Mind about those whom He wants to worship Him, and how it should be done (verse 23).

14.33-34 Jesus states that "food" for Him, in the sense of what sustains Him - is to do the will of the One Who sent Him.

5.17,19-47 Here, in prolonged discussion with the persecuting Jews, Jesus makes the following points about His relationship with the Father: [i] He allies Himself with the working of the Father (17). [ii] He says the model for what He does is that He copies what it is that the Father is doing (19). [iii] He states that the Father loves to show Him things He does (20). [iv] The Father, having life in Himself, can raise the dead, so He commits that same life to the Son (So in verses 21,26). [v] Father has given the Son authority to execute judgement (27). [vi] Jesus teaches His dependence upon, and His submission to, the Father in all matters. The justice of His judgment - actually arises out of His submission (30). [vii] He says that the Father has actually sent Him. He is on the earth because of the Father's command (36,37,43).

6.27 He is happy to have the seal of the Father (a sign of ownership) upon Him.

6.37 The disciples Jesus has are the ones which the Father has given Him, and He has charged Him to lose nothing of what He has given Him (v.39).

The image is that of a shepherd, who has been given a delegated authority over the sheep of another. It is important that not one is lost, for this would be a dereliction of duty. We shall see this shepherding motif turn up again in the study of the 10th chapter of John.

6.44 No one comes to Him unless the Father draws that person.

16.57 Jesus is dependent upon the Father for life.

17.16 His teaching, is the teaching of the Father.

7.28-29 Jesus knows the Father (1.18) and He has sent Him.

8.18-19 Jesus' witness and the Father's witness agrees. If anyone knows Jesus, they will know the Father also.

8.26 All the things which Jesus speaks, He has heard from the Father. The words of Jesus have come first from the Father.

8.27-28 The Father is pleased with Jesus' action. He is with Him (42).

"8.54 The Father glorifies the Son.

10.14-18 Jesus makes the following points: [i] Jesus knows His sheep as He knows the Father (14-15). [ii] The Father loves Him because He lays down His life for the sheep (17). [iii] He doesn't lay it down arbitrarily. He has the authority (from Father, I think implied) to lay it down and also to take it again (18). This is what Father has commanded. [iv] However, He lays it down on His own initiative. So He has chosen to obey, freely (18).

10.25-39 He states: [i] The Father has given to Him those who are His. [ii] He and the Father

are One (30). [ii] The works indicate that the Father is in Him (38).

Behind this contrast between the Pharisees and the true Shepherd, Jesus, lies the 34th chapter of Ezekiel. It gives us the understanding in the mind of Jesus as to how He is to be properly contrasted in His work to the Pharisees failure and His rejection of them as shepherds of those who have, by their dereliction of duty, become "the lost sheep of the house of Israel".

11.41 Jesus says that the Father always hears Him, and He did not doubt it.

12.27-28 A discussion between the Father and the Son recorded Jesus' soul is troubled. He recognises that He has come for the purpose of the cross. He submits to the Father in the form that He wants to see the Father's Name glorified.

12.44-46 He who believes in Jesus, and also sees Him, has also seen and believed in the Father.

12.48-50 Jesus states that: [i] To reject His words renders one open to judgment. [ii] He doesn't speak on His own initiative, but the Father has commanded Him. He tells Jesus what to speak. [iii] What the Father commands is life. Therefore Jesus acts the way He does.

14.2 Jesus' Father has a house. To which Jesus is going to prepare a place for his disciples. Then He shall return for them.

14.6-31 These things we learn: [i] Jesus is the way to the Father. And He is the only way (6). [ii] To have known Jesus and beheld Him, is to have known and beheld the Father (7). [iii] The Father and the Son co-inhere, They are within each Other. And the Father, indwelling Jesus, is the One Who works (10). [iv] The Father gets glory through the Son when we ask something of the Father "in the Son's Name" (13-14). [v] At Jesus' request, the Father sends the Holy Spirit. [vi] He who loves Jesus, will be loved by the Father (21) and the Father and the Son will come and make Their home with him (23). [vii] The disciples ought to rejoice that Jesus is going away (28), for He goes to prepare a place for them in his Father's house (3), and His Father is greater than He is (28) with the implication they ought to be delighted at the chance to meet with Father.

It is, of course, this last mentioned which the disciples had missed. They were content to simply know Jesus and did not wish Him to go away. He was actually anxious that they should come to a place where they should meet the Father, for this was his goal for them, which made sense of His coming.

15.1-2 The relationship between the Father and the Son is that of a vinedresser and the vine. This states the dependency of a Son, the care of the Father, and the purpose of the Father as the preparedness of the Son to be used by the Father for His purposes.

15.10 Jesus keeps the Father's commandments and abides in His love. His disciples do the same with Him.

15.15 All the things which He heard from the Father He has delivered to His disciples. He didn't leave out anything which was His responsibility. [There is more to say (16.12) but what Jesus Himself had to say, He did.]

15.23 Jesus states that the one who hates Him, hates His Father also.

16.5 He says that He is going to the Father.

16.15 All things that the Father has are also the things of the Son - Jesus states that the Holy Spirit will reveal these matters to the disciples after He Himself has gone.

16.23-28 Here there are a number of things: [i] He promises (again) that what they ask the Father for, in His name, He will give. [ii] He speaks of a future time, when the disciples will be asking the Father for things, and He Himself will not necessarily ask for them. This is so because the Father Himself loves them - they can deal direct with Father for themselves.

17.1-26 This prayer to the Father contains much: [i] Both the Father and the Son mutually glorify each other in the passion of Jesus (1). [ii] Jesus has authority from the Father, over all mankind, and to give life to those from among them whom the Father has given to Him (3). [iii] He states that, having come to the time just before the cross, He has accomplished the work which the Father gave Him to do - it is mission accomplished! (4) And it has brought the Father glory. [iv] He states that there was a glory which He had with the Father before the world was made (1.30). (The implication is that that glory has been temporarily laid aside - see Phil. 2.5-11) [v] This mission accomplished is delineated as manifesting the Father's Name to men. [vi] Giving the words faithfully which the Father gave Him (8). [vii] He asks that his disciples have a oneness which is the same as He and the Father have (11). [viii] He says that His "sending" of his disciples is as the Father sent Him (18). [ix] The oneness which the disciples are to have is of a sameness which Jesus and the Father have (21). There is also the truth that the disciples are in "us". This is seen as The Father in Jesus, Jesus in them and this is the basis of their unity (23). [x] He states that the Father has loved Him before the foundation of the world (24).

19.11 To Pilate Jesus states that he has no authority over Him unless it had first been given Pilate from above.

20.17 Jesus speaks of ascending to the Father. He calls the Father his "Father" and his "God". He does not lump His relationship with the Father on the same level as the relationship which He sees for His disciples with their "Father" and "God".

20.21 He sends them as the Father sent Him. The relational way of carrying out His orders is the same as He carried out the commands of His Father.

374 - The Submission of The Holy Spirit to The Father and The Son

Ephesians 1.1-14; 1 Peter 1.1-21; John 14 -16

The evidence of the Scripture, here in the gospel of John, is that the Third Person of the Trinity, in a functional way, is subordinate to the Father and the Son. There is a mutual submission within the Trinity.

14.16 The Holy Spirit comes because Jesus asked and the Father sent Him.

14.26 The Holy Spirit brings to remembrance the things which Jesus said.

16.7-15 The Holy Spirit: [i] Is sent by Jesus (7). Testifies to the work of the other members of the Trinity. [ii] Testifies to the truth of the work of the other members of the Trinity (9-10). [iii] Does not take His own initiatives - He is submitted to speak what He hears. He will disclose the things of Jesus (14) and therefore things of the Father also (15).

For other statement of the action of the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead laid out in Scripture; study the respective work of Each in passages such as: Ephesians. 1.1-14, and 1 Peter 1.1-21.

375 - The Source of Jesus' Authority was His submission

Read Matthew 8.5-13; Mark 1.27

Jesus has a remarkable testimony being constantly spoken of Him in the Gospels. It is that He is one Who speaks and teaches "with authority" [Mark 1.27]. From our study in the Gospel of John we see that it is because He was under Another, and gave glory to the Father, that other people submitted to Him. They trusted Him as being self-effacing, seeking the glory of His Father. The authority of Jesus consists in that He does not act according to his own will, but is submitted to another. In this way, we learn something precious - that, within the action of the Trinity, to obey is as divine a function as it is to command. Both are seen in God.

So when Jesus speaks, it is not just something which remains spoken, it comes into effect; what He says happens, e.g. He calls disciples (Mark 1.17), He commands spirits and they obey because they recognise not His personal force but His authority (Mark 1.23-28), He forgives sins and heals bodies (Mark 2.10-12) and He subdues and commands the natural elements (4.39-41).

Jesus' authority, derived from his submission to higher authority, was clearly recognised by a centurion soldier. Accustomed to living under such authority himself, and able to command others because he was so, he clearly saw that Jesus healed in this way. Understanding this he was motivated to appeal to Jesus on behalf of his own servant who was gravely ill [Matthew 8.5-13].

Jesus committed this authority to his disciples (Mark 2.15, John 14.12, John 20,23, Mark

16.17-18). Yet, since their authority is the same as His, it has to rest upon the same basis of submission to the Father, and also be exercised in the same way.

376 - Jesus' Command to His Disciples

John 15.1-21

Jesus states in a passage recorded in the Gospel of John 15.1-21, concerning ourselves, that :

[1] We are "in Him" as a branch to a vine (verse 1); we are in a dependent, life-giving, relationship and we are caught up in the purpose of the vinedresser (Father) to be fruitful.

[2] We cannot bear fruit for the Father if we do not sustain (abide) our obedient relationship with Jesus (verse 5).

[3] To be loved by Jesus, after the manner in which He expresses His love for the Father, is to be introduced to obedience. Joy is the fruit of obedience (verse 10-11).

[4] His commandment is that we love one another. The model for this is the way He has loved us - He has laid down His life for us (verse 12-13). This demonstrates what Jesus understands by loving friendship.

[5] Being a friend of Jesus simply means that we obey Him. These are the terms of friendship with Him (verse 14).

[6] This does not mean that we are slaves: for we are privy to what our Master is doing - we understand the program.

[7] Discipleship to Jesus arose out of His authoritative call (verse 16). We are not, primarily, disciples by our choice, but because He has exercised His choice, which, because it was in submission to the Father, was also the Father's election of us (verse 16).

377 - The Example of Service to one another

John 13.3-16 ; Luke 22.27; 1 Peter 5.1-3

The command of the Lord is to love one another, and that the way the disciples are to love one another is to serve each other [John 13.3-16]. This is the example of Jesus that He specifically applies to the relationship of mutual service.

Similarly, in Luke 22.27, we see that Jesus is greater than the disciples and He is among them to serve. In this way, the nature of Christian authority has nothing to do with the lifting up of the one who exercises it. It is not so that he may establish his own position at the expense of others but rather that he may serve, care, feed and nourish others in the faith. Paul insisted to the Corinthians that the apostolic group did not set out to "lord it over their faith" [2 Corinthians 1.24]. God wants his people to mature into what He wants them to be through the mature self-denial of their leadership (1 Peter 5.1-3).

378 - Authority is recognised by people: not forced by leadership

As the example of the Trinity shows, when three co-equals Who are love, work together there is a mutuality of submission evident, and there is a functional Leader among them.

So with Jesus' leadership of those around Him - it works through the free recognition and consent of those who are subject to it. He called and then relied upon the inherent authority of his call to elicit the free response that he sought. He did not speak truth in a dogmatic fashion that required people to believe it because He said it. Rather, He spoke the truth in a way which caused people to experience his care and then come freely to the conclusion they would obey Him. Jesus trusted for the convicting power which would win discernment, consent, and decision.

However, once a person had become a disciple, there was a call for obedience. This mirrors our own life. When we were called by God to see the Kingdom of God, and we responded by grace to this gracious invitation, then we discovered that there was a point of entry into a relationship where we came under the rule of the Kingdom; this is another way of saying that we personally submitted to the King. At the consideration of this point of entry, Jesus is non-pushy, although urgent. He seeks to recognise the ones the Father is giving Him. In this way He makes clear that the call is to "whosoever will...".

However, there is a very different position given us once we submit to that rule. It is like the day a man joins the army, the minute he signs his paper, the authority of the army takes him at his word. So it is with us. The initial submission leads to the life of ongoing obedience which we render. In this sense, and at this place, Jesus is demanding - and rightly so, for He has taken us at our word, we have submitted to Him.

Authority among God's people rests upon the fact that they are called by God. Jesus had a call of God. And we shall see a similar principle at work in the appointment of deacons (Acts 6), and the commissioning of some missionaries (Acts 13.2-3).

There is also the authority that springs from the fact of one who gives himself to God for others. This is the mark of our Lord's work. He became obedient unto death, and hence was exalted (Phil. 2.5-11). See also the context and study John 10.7-15. Christian authority is never derived from any institutional power or personal magnetism, rather from the sharing of love that causes a person to lay down his life for the sheep.

379 - Mutual Submission one to another

The New Testament speaks of submission in many settings:

[1] Submission to God: [i] by Christ 1 Cor. 15.27-28; (ii) by us Heb. 12.9; James 4.7; Rom. 8.7; 10.3.

[2] Submission to Christ. 1 Cor. 15.27; Heb. 2.8,10; Phil. 2.9-10.

[3] Submission to one another

[i] Submission by wives to husbands. Discussed in Col. 3.18; 1 Peter 3.2; and in Eph. 5.21-33 where the submission of the wife is discussed in reference to a husband who shows the love of Christ to her.

[ii] Submission to parents. Luke 5.21; Romans 1.30; Eph. 6.1-3; Col. 3.20.

[iii] Submission to employers. Titus 2.9; 1 Peter 2.18.

[iv] Submission to civil authorities. Romans 13.1,5; Titus 3.1.

[v] Submission to leaders in the church. 1 Peter 5.5; 1 Cor.16.

It is helpful to see that the Person Who states how he wants His children to operate is the King. In this way, the king sets the relations to the rest of the people for you. We are no longer our own. In this way, He has a method of certain "authority lines" which express his order both within the human and the angelic sphere. We might like to think of this as his structural order. This insistence of the King, to speak into the lives of His subjects of the way they shall conduct their affairs with fellow humans and spirits simply reflects His overall sovereignty, and the relation of beings who are accountable to Him. He is not vague, but accurate and distinct, in these relations.

Notice that what is involved here in these "authority lines" is not a statement of the worth of the individuals, but a way of relating when they do so. Authority simply has to do with the Author - it is the fact that there is One Who has a mind about how we should do certain things when we are called upon to do them. In this way, we are called to ask in any given relation at any moment, "What is the mind of the Author about this position? Are there any 'standing instructions' that are to govern my relating at this point?"

Notice also the breadth of these "authority lines". They have to do with God, Christ, marriage, family relations, work relations, civil government and the church. That is to say, every sphere of life; whether personal, private, social or civil life. We cannot, meaning we are not at liberty to, rebel against the King in these matters.

Tied up with this structurally relational order, is the importance of understanding that the mind of the King shows us the best way to do things, not only because it is right, but also because with the King which we have, what is right is what is best for us: for our King is also the Creator of the whole world. This has the implication that to act in such a way as to attempt to move outside these lines is stupid and dangerous.

380 - Mutual Submission - an openness to give and also to receive

There is a basic humility required of us as we live together. It is the willingness to prefer one another, and at the same time to be prepared to give and receive ministry. In the context of charismatic ministry - which is the ministry done by the operation of charismatic gifts through faith - it is vital to be prepared to submit to the Lord in the way that we are open to receive from one another. What this comes to mean in practice is that we depend on one another's faith.

Submission here then comes to mean, not so much the submission to structural order as in #379 above, but rather, that we are actually prepared to admit our need and interdependence of one another. This is vital for true growth of the body as well as every individual member.

We need to make certain that there is no person from whom we would not receive ministry. This is what is at stake in 1 Corinthians 13, which is sandwiched between the discussion of the use of charismata in 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14.

It is one to another. The submission is mutual. If sometimes person A submits to B when B is exercising some ministry or function; then it is also true that B will submit to A when A exercises ministry or function. The whole body submits to each member, and each member submits to the whole body.

381 - The Power of Submission in Ministry

The real importance of this Biblical teaching is that it not only, yet most importantly, brings honour to Jesus; it also sets free the body of Christ to function in such a way that it sustains its direction and drive whilst it goes forward in harmony and unity.

When brothers and sisters can so function that they recognise the movement of the dynamic Spirit of God working among them - then He can really have his way in an ordered and beautiful way.

Further, the leadership of a body of believers is then able to grow - for they are set free to actually lead the assembly. This makes for power and also purpose.

In personal ministry, working two and three in agreement, makes for the variety of the movement of the Spirit.

Just as we saw in the Trinity of Persons, so it is true that the Unity is preserved - there is leadership and also there is diversity. Each is useful to the concerted functioning of the whole. So in the Church of God, there is the same unity and diversity - this is the mark of growth and

good apostolic order.

382 - Disciples of Jesus only, never of one another

Matt. 28.20

The risen Lord stated that all authority had been given to Him over the nations. He said to make disciples of the nations - and that His disciples were to preach the gospel and to baptise and teach. However, the thing to which this leads is that they are to be taught "to observe all that I have commanded you". In this there is to be a passing on of the call to obey Jesus which the early apostles had.

Jesus alone is our Master - we are all brethren (Matt. 23.10). When the rest of the New Testament goes on to speak of disciples then it does not mean persons who are in a dependent relationship to some human leader, but rather are members of the Church who are in subjection to Christ. See Acts 6.1; 7.9 and in 11.26 where disciples means "Christians".

383 - Functional Leadership

It is a functioning leadership and submission which is really so dynamically used by God in the church. In this way, we should see that where there is great love, the charismatic gifts can flow and be mightily used by God. We see submission only in practice. Yet, leadership may well imply an office. This is an order of doing things - yet once we are doing, then the mutual submission begins to release the variety and diversity of gifts. Leaders who occupy an office need to understand this dynamic - there is an initiating leadership which is often the starting function of the office - however, once we are going, leadership which is associated with the office is not abandoned, yet, it is there to release the variety of the ministries.

6 - Serving 'in the Spirit' of the Rabbi

384 – The Corinthian context

Paul wrote, in 1 Corinthians, concerning matters of his concern in the Corinthian church and also replied to matters about which they had written to him.

So, in the first four chapters, he addresses the problem of the way they are regarding their leaders. They had divided into parties based on personalities.

In chapter 5 he addresses the problem of the man living incestuously with his mother. And he refers (1 Corinthians 5.9) to the fact that he had written to them a letter before he wrote the letter that we call 1 Corinthians.

In chapter 6, having dealt with the importance of solving the church's problems among themselves, and not going before the public law courts, he then speaks of the matters which he says they had written to him about.

These matters were:

[1] the unmarried among them (7.1)

[2] material sacrificed to idols (8.1), which leads into a discussion of the Christian person (9.1-23), and an exhortation to flee idolatry [i] they are to be clear that they cannot go back to the demons' tables from which they come and also come to the Lord's supper (10.14-23) [ii] they are to remember the place of men and women in respect of each other, as to the spiritual order of the universe, for they must live as supernaturalists and remember the angels (11.10) - this has the practical implication of the headship of the man over the woman in respect of the spiritual realities in the church. (11.1-16). [iii] they must order themselves better in love as to their eating of the Lord's supper.(11.17-34)

[3] spirituals - where what is meant is the use of powers which come from supernatural sources.(12,13,14)

[4] an excursion on the resurrection (15)

[5] the collection for the saints (16)

385 – Concerning the discernment of spiritual gifts

What is clear from the topics listed above is that the Corinthian church had converts who had been dominated previously by demonic powers which had manifested themselves in demonic feasts and sacrificial meals [chapter 8 and 10]. They had come from a demonic experience where they had seen supernatural "gifts" operating before and they had now come into the Christian experience of "supernaturals" and needed some guidance about discernment, as to which was which, and also about how to use the ones which they exercised, in respect of their gathering together [chapter 12,13,14].

It is really important for us, in the twenty first century, post-Christian West, who have become, by and large, "naturalists" in our thinking, to see that the Corinthian problem was not our one.

They had come from a demonic base which had had plenty of manifestations in "spiritual matters" - they were no strangers to such things; in much the same way as the modern animist, in some countries today, is not a stranger to these matters either.

[1] The discernment of source

As Paul saw it, the Corinthian need was to distinguish the sources that were operating. It is this which he addresses in 1 Corinthians 12.1-3. It is expressly a test of the source of the "spiri-

tuals" by the attitude expressed towards the person of Jesus. This will help them distinguish demonic from godly.

[2] Holy Spirit works in diversity

But they had another problem. They also were, no doubt, familiar with evil spirits. And they knew that each evil spirit manifested in a particular way. So Paul, to avoid the worry and the confusion for them, wants to tell them that they must be aware that the Holy Spirit is One Spirit but He has a variety of manifestations. They are not to think of a multiplicity of spirits in operation in respect of the charismata [gifts of grace], they are to think of the unity and the diversity as being from the same Source. In this way, they must not take their knowledge of the way the demonic spirits work into their understanding of the Holy Spirit. They would then tie Him down to one manifestation, and they would also then, of course, miss the many other manifestations of His work among them.

386 – Visible, effective and powerful service through spiritual gifts

1 Corinthians 12

To us who come from the "naturalist" base of the philosophy we have accepted, we need to become thorough-going supernaturalists before we can appreciate the problem at all. For us then, it is important to take into account, what is said below. We shall have to begin with the early statements of 1 Corinthians, for it is there that the differences between the naturalists and the supernaturalists are discussed.

In the early statements about spiritual gifts in the discussion recorded in 1 Corinthians 12 Paul uses a variety of terms for what he means. Each of these terms, although clearly about the same thing, convey different information for us about the matter.

[1] "Spirituals" (πνευμάτικα), - things of the spirit. (12.1)

The Bible does distinguish between "natural" things and "spiritual" things. It has to do with the source of something.

In 1 Cor.1-2 Paul had made it clear that when he came to the Corinthians he expressly did not come to preach for them to grasp it by a natural cleverness (1. 18-25). Rather, it was to them, naturally speaking, foolishness. They could not receive it (2.14). But when, among Christians, there is teaching, then there is a combining of "spiritual" (thoughts) with spiritual (words) 1.Cor.2.13. In this way, they come to understand what it is that they have already received from God (2.12b)

So here, although these gifts operate through our natural bodies, the source of them is divine, not human.

[2] "Gifts" (χαρίσματα) (12.4,9) - these are things of grace.

They come to us freely and without merit. They are the functions God provides for His people to minister to one another and in the world.

[3] "Services, ministries" (διδασκονίαι) (12.5) - things of service to others

The reason why they are given by God, is for the service of others. It is true, that because of another biblical principle, that it is more "blessed to give than to receive", there are often lovely side effects for the operator.

[4] "Powers, effects" (ἐνεργήματα) (12.6) - effective power

Here the emphasis is on the fact that they are momentary endowments of power rather than permanent things which we hold on to. These special burst of divine energy are for a particular purpose. They operate for that purpose immediately.

[5] "Manifestations" (φανερώσεις) (12.7) - visible works of the Spirit

These gifts are able to make the Holy Spirit visible, not as to His Person, but as to His work. We see the effects of His presence through the manifestation of His power. People actually "see and hear" (Acts 2.33) something.

Michael Harper has summed up this teaching. He speaks of spiritual gifts as powers that are freely given to persons by the Holy Spirit. They are manifested through the natural faculties of our minds, mouths and hands in the service of others for their blessing and for God's glory.

387 - The Variety of the Gifts for the Task of service

When we see what the gifts are intended to do, and the environment in which they are to work, we will not be surprised that there is a great variety of them. Gifts and graces abound in all areas of our Christian witness and life within the fellowship of believers.

[1] **1 Corinthians 12.8-10** Here, nine gifts are listed. They come under three easily recognisable headings: (i) gifts to say: tongues, interpretation of tongues and prophecy; (ii) gifts to do, healings, miracles and faith; (iii) gifts to know, discerning of spirits, wisdom and knowledge.

[2] **1 Corinthians 7.7** Paul speaks of his ability to sustain the celibate life as a charism - a gift of God. He implies that the man who cannot sustain the celibate life has another gift, which in this context is marriage.

[3] **Romans 12.7-8** Here we find categories of service listed by Paul; service, teaching, exhortation, contributing, aiding, acts of mercy, leadership.

[4] **Ephesians 4.11**

Here are a list of offices or functions which are at work in the church. Apostles, prophets,

evangelists, pastors and teachers are persons who exercise gifts individually. Notice that what is described here are people rather than the charismata they each possess.



Janice and David Boan, an Australian couple, live in Perth, the capital city of the state of Western Australia.

They have been married for 46 years and have five children and 19 grand-children. Throughout this time, they have been teaching the Lord's Word among Christians.

After David was ordained in 1967, he served in two Anglican parishes and a School Chaplaincy in Melbourne. They trained for missionary service but after health issues prevented them going overseas, they taught in a community at the Montrose House and later took the parish of St. Jude's Carlton for seven years. Moving to Perth in Western Australia in 1981, David cared for the Anglican parish of St Alban's in Highgate for seven years.

In 1988, they left the Anglican scene to teach into scattered and smaller groups of Christians in some Australian towns. Later the work extended into the UK, Italy, and India throughout 1995-2000.

At the beginning of 2012, in concert with others, their work became more accessible at the York St Silo, at 4 York Street in North Perth. It is here that David and Jan share the work of the putting forth of God's Word.

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4 York Street North Perth WA 6006
www.davidboan.net