

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

In 1515, a priest by the name of Martin Luther was the professor of sacred theology in the Catholic University at Wittenberg. He was involved in teaching the epistle of Romans to his students. He became so fascinated by the book of Romans that he taught it every day. As he prepared his daily lectures he became more and more appreciative of the centrality of Paul's doctrine of "justification by faith." Luther had been agonizing for years over how he could please God so that God would accept him, but he just couldn't seem to find the answer. Nothing that any one could say was able to alleviate the torment he was experiencing. Luther states that he longed to understand Paul's epistle to the Romans. Nothing stood in his way except for that one expression, "the righteousness of God." Luther goes on, "Because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous." Finally Luther was able to see the truth, that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby through grace and sheer mercy, God provides us salvation by faith. This is often referred to by the description, *justification by faith*. Luther describes that he felt reborn at that moment and that he had gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took on a new meaning. Where before the righteousness of God had filled him with hate, it now began to fill him with a sweet love. Just look at the contribution Luther made to the Church.

Now before going any further it is essential that we clearly understand some terms regarding what it means to truly be saved. We need to understand terms such as "Gospel," "righteousness," "justification by faith," and probably "saved" as well. In order to do that we have to go way back to the Old Testament times in Israel to get some idea of how the Jewish law-court functioned. The Jewish law-court was set up somewhat like our court system in that there was a judge, a plaintiff, who was the accuser (today it is most often a district attorney like on Law and Order). There was of course a defendant, who today can defend himself/herself or hire an attorney to defend them against the accusations of the plaintiff.

If the judge ruled in favor of the plaintiff, the plaintiff would be declared righteous, but if he ruled for the defendant, it was the defendant who was declared righteous. In the case of the Jewish law-court the judge is declaring one of the parties to be right or righteous, which means they are not guilty and have done no wrong. In Old Testament times plaintiffs personally brought accusations against those they felt had wronged them and those who were accused would personally defend themselves. The judge would declare one of the parties to be right or righteous.

Let's first see how this process applied to the folks in the Old Testament. God made a covenant with Adam and Eve. It was pretty simple, although apparently not simple enough for Adam and Eve. God told them that if they obeyed Him they would be blessed and allowed to remain in the Garden of Eden. He made only one stipulation: that they not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Genesis 2:15-17:

Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to

cultivate it and keep it.

16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

You see God likes to know that His servants trust Him completely before He gives them His blessings or entrusts them with further responsibility within the kingdom. It's a little quirk of His. Well, Adam and Eve failed the test big time, and as a result God withdrew His blessing and sent them from the Garden of Eden which was probably very close if not identical to the paradise of Heaven. Because of their disobedience, sin entered the world and the relationship between God, humankind, and nature was severed.

But as always God was one step ahead of everyone and had a contingency plan for Adam and Eve's failure to obey. That plan involved reconciliation between God, humans, and nature, and it would be fulfilled through Jesus Christ. But until Christ came, he provided for reconciliation that would come through faith in God and His promises which included that coming day of the Messiah, Jesus Christ as Savior of the world. In the meantime, all those who trusted, who had faith in God's promises, were credited with righteousness. So all of the people who lived before Christ were saved to eternal life if they trusted in the promises of God. By way of clarification, "saved" simply means people are declared to be right or righteous before God and are going to Heaven.

God also made a promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:4-6:

4 Then the Lord said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own to inherit everything I am giving you."

5 Then the Lord brought Abram outside beneath the night sky and told him, "Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that—too many to count!"

6 And Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord declared him righteous because of his faith.

Abraham's faith in God demonstrated that Abraham was a willing believer in God's promise. This faith in God engaged God's mercy and because of God's grace and mercy Abraham was judged to be right with God and therefore God declared him righteous. Without God's declaration of righteousness, neither Abraham or anyone else could ever be saved. If you're wondering how this works, let's look at a remarkable formula that is present throughout the Bible, the formula that reunites God with His creation.

Theologians refer to this as the covenant structure, but theologians love to make the simple complicated, and the complicated impossible. So let's just look at this formula as involving three basic categories that will lead to a person's salvation or to their condemnation.

We'll call the first category **Provision** and/or **Promise**. This category contains God's

provision or promise to do something. Being saved cannot result from what we do by our own actions to please God. Salvation comes unconditionally by God's grace as a gift for those who trust Him.

The second category contains certain **requirements**, whereby God explains to us how we are to live in the present in order to do His will through faith, hope, and love. This is a human response based on what God did for us previously in the first category.

The third category contains promises of **blessings** or **curses** and are a window for humankind into the certainty of their future. There is a blessing in store for those who satisfy the requirements in category two and curses for those who don't.

If we put all these categories together, here's how it works: in the past God has provided everything we need in order to fulfill the requirements He has established for how we should live our lives and find salvation through Him. If we follow God's direction we'll wind up in heaven, if we don't we'll end up in hell. Let me give you an example from Scripture to show you how this is practically applied. Let's look at Matthew 7:13 and 14:

*“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.
14 “For **the gate is small** and the way is narrow **that leads to life**, and there are few who find it.*

In this passage we find a provision from God for salvation. The provision is the **small gate** in verse 14, which is Christ. We are also told what we must do in this life in order to attain that salvation. We must **enter through that narrow gate**, which simply means we must believe in Christ's message and unite ourselves with Him. And the blessing, **leads to life**, is found toward the end of verse 14, which means a new life while we are here on this earth, and then eternal life in heaven forever. There is also a curse thrown in here for those who don't obey God's requirement, and that is, **for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction**, which is a warning to people who choose the ways of the world over the way of Jesus.

We find this theme in passages throughout the entire Bible. You might want to start trying to identify them. It may open up meaning for you in Scripture that you've never seen before.

God also made a covenant with Israel through Moses in Deuteronomy 30:1-10. I'll let you diagram that one on your own. God also gave Israel the law as part of His provision. God, in effect, told the people what was going to be necessary in order to be saved, Romans 2:13:

“for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.”

One must obey the law in order to be declared righteous, in order to be saved. Through believing and trusting in God's promises, the Old Testament saints became members of

the family of God and were therefore saved as well in the anticipation of Jesus' death, which would provide forgiveness for all people throughout history. Christ was meant to be the goal of the law. He was to be the only one who could achieve perfect adherence to the commands of God. The details of this can be the subject for another sermon if you request it.

But keeping all this in mind we can now fast-forward to the New Testament and the time of Christ. The basic message of the New Testament is the Gospel, and it tells us that if we hear the Gospel, the Holy Spirit can use that knowledge to create belief in the Gospel message within a person. Such belief results in the person becoming a member of the community of the people of God, the Church. Many choose to express this inner commitment with an outward demonstration of public water baptism. As one becomes a member in God's family through belief in the Gospel message, God displays His grace to us by declaring us righteous. The promise or blessing of God is that we will be declared righteous for all eternity if we adhere to God's requirement of believing in the message about Jesus. The provision God gives us to accomplish this requirement is the message itself and the help of the Holy Spirit to believe it.

Let me provide just a little more detail for clarification. The Gospel message was and is the announcement that Jesus Christ is Lord. The message reveals as well the righteousness (perfection and holiness) of God and His faithfulness in dealing with the sin of the world by fulfilling His promises in Jesus. You see what God needed was a faithful messenger and servant, a true Israelite who would fulfill the promises of God by keeping the law perfectly and thus deal with the sin of the world by providing forgiveness for that sin.

Through Jesus the requirements of the law were accomplished for all those who believed in what He did (Romans 3:21-31; 4:1-25; 10:3; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9). In providing all of this, God has fulfilled all of His covenant promises and demonstrated all the requirements of the Jewish law-court judge.

As one hears the message of the Gospel just described, the Holy Spirit begins to work in that person and takes the person to the point of decision. One can either accept and believe in the message or, as many do, reject it. But if they believe it, they confess with their mouths that Jesus is Lord and are received into the family of God, the Church. As a result of their belief, God, the great law-court Judge, justifies them or declares them righteous. This righteousness that they are given is only attainable by Jesus, and through Him and because of what He accomplished on the cross it can be given to us. Jesus can give His righteousness freely to all who believe. As Satan (the plaintiff) stands before the judge accusing us of sin, Jesus, the attorney for the defense, our advocate in heaven before the throne of God, provides the perfect argument for our case, which is His death on the cross. Our sins are forgiven. This is what is meant by the term **justification by faith**, and it could not be achieved without the grace of God and the working of the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately for those who do not accept and believe the message, Jesus does not appear as the attorney for the defense and God (the Judge) sees clearly the guilt and sin of

the accused and declares for the plaintiff Satan, and Satan thus gets the person for eternity.

Faith is not something that one does to gain admittance to the family of God. It is a gift from God. It is the membership badge which proves that one is already a member. And that proof comes by the way we conduct our lives in accordance to the will of God. Such people are guaranteed a future in Heaven (Romans 5:12-21; 6:12-23).

God in Christ has won the battle over evil and is now working to implement the victory through the Gospel. Human pride attempts to win the victory for itself rather than to accept the humbling victory of God. The justification of sinful humanity sets the record straight, Romans 4:5:

And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness.

So I believe we are now prepared to plunge right into the book of Romans itself. Let's begin. Romans 1:1:

"Paul,"

Let's stop there. We would not be able to understand the book of Romans without understanding its author, Paul. Paul, by the way was not his birth name, it was the name given him with his status as a Roman citizen. He was named Saul at birth.

Paul was born a Jew in a family of Pharisees in Tarsus of Cilicia, a center of commerce and learning that embraced the Greek culture and Roman politics. It was a city of which he could be proud. His parents named him Saul after the first king of Israel, but Acts 13:9 notes that he "was also called Paul" (NIV). He uses the Roman name, Paul, throughout his letters. A Pharisee, for those who are not that familiar with the term, can be described as a member of a Jewish sect of the period noted for strict observance of rites and ceremonies of the written law and for insistence on the validity of their own oral traditions concerning the law¹

From religious parents Paul received knowledge of the Law and Prophets and the Hebrew and Aramaic languages (Acts 21:40; 22:2-3; 23:6; Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5-6). We may assume Aramaic was Paul's native tongue. Aramaic would have been the language spoken in the home and also in the synagogue Paul's family attended. His family was strictly observant of the Jewish way of life and maintained their links with their home country of Israel.² Tarsus, however, was not a Jewish city. Rather it had a Greek character where the Greek language was spoken and Greek literature was cultivated. This accounts for Paul's familiarity with Greek (Acts 21:37), the language of the streets and

¹ Merriam-Webster, I. 1996, c1993. Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary. Includes index. (10th ed.). Merriam-Webster: Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.

² Bruce, F.F., Paul the Apostle of the Heart Set Free (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1998). P.43.

shops of Tarsus.

Jews were brought to Tarsus, the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia, in 171 B.C. to promote business in the region. At that time Paul's ancestors were probably given Roman citizenship. Paul inherited his Roman citizenship from his father, which would prove to be of great value to Paul in his later life as he traveled with the Gospel through the Roman Empire (Acts 16:37; 22:25–29; 23:27). Paul may have had several brothers and sisters, but Acts 23:16 mentions only one sister whose son performed a lifesaving act for his uncle. Like all Jewish sons Paul called his father "Abba," an Aramaic word Paul later wove into the fabric of the Christian faith as an affectionate and intimate title for God the Father (Rom 8:15; Gal. 4:6). The closest translation we have for the word is "daddy."

Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). He may have learned this trade from his father, or he may have selected it as a means of self-support as was the custom of those in rabbinical training. Tarsus was well known for the goat's hair cloth called *cilicium*. It was the weaving of this cloth and the fashioning of it into tents, sails, awnings, and cloaks that gave Paul his economic independence during his apostolic ministry (Acts 18:3; 20:34; 28:30; 2 Cor 11:9; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2Thess. 3:8).

EDUCATION

Although born in Tarsus, Paul testified to the Jews in Jerusalem that he had been "*brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel*" (Acts 22:3). It is not clear when Paul was first brought to Jerusalem, but it is likely that sometime between the ages of thirteen and twenty he began his formal rabbinical studies. His teacher, Gamaliel, was the grandson of Hillel, who began the Pharisaic school whose teachings run through the Jewish writings to this day. No doubt it was while studying under Gamaliel in Hillel's school that Paul began to advance in Judaism beyond many Jews of his own age and became extremely zealous, which can also be translated enthusiastic, gung ho, or nutty, for the traditions of his fathers (Gal. 1:14). Paul had become one of the most highly educated men of his time. Perhaps then also Paul began to experience the struggles with the law he would later describe in Romans chapter 7.

While Paul was studying the Jewish law in Jerusalem, Jesus was working as a carpenter in Nazareth. When Jesus began His ministry around A.D. 27, He gathered the disciples who would one day be Paul's fellow workers in the gospel. After fulfilling His ministry and accomplishing redemption by dying on the cross of Calvary, Christ then rose from the grave and ascended into Heaven 40 days later giving birth to the Church, which was given the Holy Spirit of Jesus at the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem just ten days after His ascension.

After completing his education, Paul returned to Tarsus and it is believed he became the leader of a synagogue there. But when Paul heard about this Jesus movement that was going on in Jerusalem, he felt it was necessary to take immediate and forceful action to nip the Church in the bud so to speak, and put an end to its threat to the Jewish and particularly the Pharisaic way of life. So he returned to Jerusalem.

THE PERSECUTOR

Shortly after Paul's return, the members of certain synagogues in Jerusalem, including the Cilician synagogue, that of Paul's native land (Acts 6:9), could not cope with the teaching (Acts 6:10) of a member of the church in Jerusalem named Stephen (Acts 6:5, 8). According to F. F. Bruce, "Stephen took seriously Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the Jewish temple maintaining that such a structure was not part of the divine plan of God for His people. He further maintained that the coming of Jesus had profoundly changed the status of the Mosaic law."³ A group of Jewish leaders accused Stephen of blasphemy before the Sanhedrin (Acts 6:11–15). The Sanhedrin was the supreme council and tribunal of the Jews headed by a High Priest and having religious, civil, and criminal jurisdiction.⁴ After Stephen's eloquent defense (Acts 7:1–53) they dragged him out of the city, where he was stoned to death, thereby becoming the first Christian martyr (a person who voluntarily suffers death as the penalty of witnessing to and refusing to renounce a religion⁵). We do not know the exact role Paul played in these proceedings, but we do know that he was present and prominent in the execution. We learn this from Acts 7:58:

58 When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

In fact later in his life Paul described the event in Acts 26:9-11:

9 "Indeed, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 And that is what I did in Jerusalem; with authority received from the chief priests, I not only locked up many of the saints in prison, but I also cast my vote against them when they were being condemned to death.

11 By punishing them often in all the synagogues I tried to force them to blaspheme; and since I was so furiously enraged at them, I pursued them even to foreign cities (NRSV).

At Stephen's trial, Paul heard Stephen's historical method of defense, and he later used it himself at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:16–41). He witnessed the man with the face of an angel (Acts 6:15), full of the Holy Spirit, looking heavenward and proclaiming "*the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God*" (Acts 7:56). Later Paul would write to the Colossians to "*seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God*" (Col. 3:1). Stephen's death initiated the events that would culminate in Paul's conversion and commission as the apostle to the Gentiles. But at the time, Saul was wholeheartedly applauding Stephen's death. In Acts 8:1-4 we read:

1 And Saul approved of their killing him. That day a severe persecution

³ op Cit, p.67.

⁴ Merriam-Webster, I. 1996, c1993. Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary. Includes index. (10th ed.). Merriam-Webster: Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.

⁵ Merriam-Webster, I. 1996, c1993. Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary. Includes index. (10th ed.). Merriam-Webster: Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.

began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria.

2 Devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him.

3 But Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison.

4 Now those who were scattered went from place to place, proclaiming the word (NRSV).

Paul became a leader of the oppressors of the church. According to the Scripture, “*He breathed threats and murder against the disciples of Jesus*” (Acts 9:1) and “*persecuted the church of God, and wasted it*” (Gal. 1:13), “*binding and delivering into prisons both men and women*” (Acts 22:4). Paul was so zealous that he convinced the high priest of the Sanhedrin to allow him to extradite Christians from other cities back to Jerusalem for punishment.

CONVERSION AND CALLING

One of these foreign cities was Damascus. **Acts 9:1-2:**

1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,

2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Paul traveled to Damascus to arrest followers of Christ But on the way something extremely significant happened. On the outskirts of the city came the event that was to transform this law-keeping persecutor of Jesus Christ and blasphemous destroyer of the infant church into the chief propagator of the Gospel of grace and master builder of the church of God (1 Tim. 1:13; 1 Cor. 3:10). This was the occasion of Paul’s conversion . It was of such revolutionary and lasting importance that three detailed accounts of it are given in the New Testament (Acts 9:1–19; 22:1–21; 26:1–23). And Paul makes many references to it in his writings (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; Gal. 1:15–16; Eph. 3:3; Phil. 3:12).

At that time a light from heaven, brighter than the midday sun, perhaps the kind of light that might be produced by a nuclear blast, shone around Paul and his traveling companions, and they fell to the ground (Acts 26:13–14). Only Paul, however, heard the voice of Jesus instruct him in his commission as a minister and witness to the Gentiles (Acts 26:14–18). There’s no way to describe the incredible terror Paul must have felt at this moment. When He asked Jesus who He was, Jesus responded, “I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting.” Such an experience would have terrified anyone. This was the Jesus Paul hated. The Jesus whose followers Paul had mercilessly killed. This was the Jesus who was supposed to be dead but was alive!

Paul’s own explanation of his Damascus road experience, his immediate conversion, and apostleship should be proof enough alone that Christianity is a divine revelation.”⁶

⁶ Lyttelton, G, *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul* (London, 1747), Paragraph 1.

Temporarily blinded, Paul's companions had to lead him into Damascus (Acts 9:8). There, the disciple Ananias, who was sent by Jesus to restore Paul's sight, did so. "At once Paul began to preach in the synagogues," according to Acts 9:20, "that Jesus is the Son of God." Then in Acts 9:21-23, Luke writes:

21 All who heard him were amazed. "Isn't this the same man who persecuted Jesus' followers with such devastation in Jerusalem?" they asked. "And we understand that he came here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests."

22 Saul's preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

23 After a while the Jewish leaders decided to kill him.

Paul was threatened with death by the Jews to whom he preached Jesus but was protected by the believers. Paul was cleverly delivered from his persecutors as Luke goes on to tell us in verses 24 and 25:

24 But Saul (Paul)⁷ was told about their plot, and that they were watching for him day and night at the city gate so they could murder him.

25 So during the night, some of the other believers let him down in a large basket through an opening in the city wall.

PREPARATION

Then began a period of preparation, which lasted about thirteen years. During this time, Paul first was in the desert of Arabia for three years. It would appear that this is where Paul received His theological training, and he received it directly from Jesus according to Galatians 1:11,12. Following this, Paul returned to Damascus where he preached for a short time and then visited Peter in Jerusalem for fifteen days (Gal. 1:17-18).

At first the disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of him, not believing that he was also a disciple of Jesus (Acts 9:26), but he was championed by Barnabas and thus accepted by the believers in Jerusalem (Acts 9:27-28). Paul also preached in Jerusalem, perhaps in the same synagogues in which he had heard Stephen; but when his life was again threatened by the Jews, the believers sent him away to Tarsus (Acts 9:29-30; Gal. 1:21).

The end of Paul's preparation came when Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for him and bring him to Antioch. By this time Paul had lived for ten years in Cilicia. Since his conversion, before being sent to Tarsus, he had proclaimed Jesus (Acts 9:20), speaking boldly in the name of the Lord (Acts 9:27). There is no reason to think he did otherwise while living among the Gentiles in Cilicia. In fact, his work may have been so effective that he began to attract the attention of the church in Antioch. Barnabas decided that Paul would make an excellent pastor for this new church. So Paul went to Antioch where he and Barnabas pastored together.

⁷ Parentheses added.

SENT OUT FROM ANTIOCH

The church in Antioch had its origins in the persecution instigated by Paul after the death of Stephen (Acts 11:19). Until they arrived in Antioch, the scattered believers had only spoken the word to Jews (Acts 11:19). It was here that the Gentiles first heard the Good News (Acts 11:20), and many became believers (Acts 11:21). It is fitting that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:13; Acts 22:21), who was as yet unknown by sight to the churches of Judea (Gal. 1:22), should appear in Antioch to formally begin the ministry to which he was called (Acts 26:17–18).

Barnabas and Paul stayed with the church in Antioch for a year. Their work there was so blessed that a new name, “Christian,” was coined to distinguish the believers in Antioch from Gentiles and Jews (Acts 11:26). Hearing of a famine in Judea, the disciples in Antioch determined to send relief to the believers in Judea and did so through Barnabas and Paul (Acts 11:30) who carried the offering to Jerusalem. Such a gift displayed to the Jewish churches the potency of the gospel among the Gentiles. Their mission complete, Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch with John Mark, Barnabas’s cousin (Acts 12:25; Col. 4:10).

Beginning from the day of Pentecost the work of sharing the Gospel had been casual and incidental. Contacts were made in the homes, the marketplace, the streets, synagogues, highways, etc. (Acts 3:1; 5:12, 42; 8:26–29; 10:22). But in Antioch, the Holy Spirit initiated a determined effort to evangelize a section of the Roman Empire (Acts 13:1–3). By the Holy Spirit’s instructions, the church designated Barnabas and Paul for this work. With the prayers and encouragement of this church and with John Mark as their assistant, Barnabas and Paul, sent out by the Holy Spirit, sailed for Cyprus (Acts 13:4).⁸ And so began the ministry to which Paul was called, to be the apostle to the Gentiles. This is the first of the three missionary journeys Paul made and which are described in Acts 13-21.

PAUL’S FAITHFULNESS

Why did Paul write the book of Romans? It would seem that at this point in his ministry God was showing him the tremendous potential of reaching into the heart of the Roman Empire for Christ. Paul also wanted to get to know them, establish the church there, and get their support so that at a later time he could move on into Spain (Romans 15:28). So the letter to the Romans was an introduction of himself as an apostle and of his doctrine so that they would have no question about it. Paul writes this letter to notify them of the truth about Jesus, to show that he was truly an apostle, to give them confidence in him, and to expect his arrival.

Paul was gentle, humble and he had a loving heart according to Romans 5:5. He had a great sense of God’s love, and he also had a great love for God. He understood God’s love and he loved God in return. He also had a great love for Israel (Romans 9), and a great love for the Church (Romans 16). He also had a great desire to see others love (Romans 13:9,10). Paul is simply full of love and a great example to us all of the love of Christ. Now when you have a man with a biblical mind, a determined will to obey God’s

⁸ Douglas, J. D., Comfort, P. W., & Mitchell, D. 1997, c1992. Who's who in Christian history. Illustrated lining papers. Tyndale House: Wheaton, Ill.

plan at all costs, and a man filled with love, you have a man that can be used by God to turn the world upside down. Paul lived to glorify God and he repeatedly tells us throughout his letters to be like him, to follow his example (1 Corinthians 11:1; 4:16; Philippians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians). God can use us in the very same way if we live the way Paul lived and love the way Paul loved. Next week we will begin to understand this incredible letter itself.