

STUDIES IN ROMANS

By B.H. Carroll, D.D., LL.D.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD
of the
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

- 1935 -

IX CONCLUSION: PRACTICAL ADMONITIONS

Romans 12:1 to 16:27

I. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION BY GRACE APPLIED TO PRACTICAL LIFE

The prevalent characteristic of all Paul's teachings concerning the Gospel is the unfailing observance of the order and relation of doctrine and morals. He never "puts the cart before the horse," and never drives the horse without the care attached and following after. He was neither able to conceive of morals not based on antecedent doctrine, nor to conceive of doctrine not fruiting in holy living. He rigidly adhered to the CHRIST idea, "**Make the tree good, and his fruit good.**" His clear mind never confounded cause and effect. To his logical and philosophical mind it was a reversal of all natural and spiritual law to expect good trees as a result of good fruit, but rather good fruit evidencing a good tree. So he conceived of justification through faith, and regeneration through the SPIRIT as obligating to holy living. If he fired up his doctrinal engine, it was not to exhaust its steam in whistling, but in sawing logs, or grinding grist, or drawing trains.

The modern cry, "Give us morals and away with dogma," would have been to him a philosophical absurdity, just as the antinomian cry, "faith makes void the law -- Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" was abhorrent and blasphemous to him.

A justification of a sinner through grace that delivered from the guilt of sin was unthinkable to him if unaccompanied by a regeneration that delivered from the dominion of sin.

He expected no good works from the dead, but insisted that those made alive were created unto good works. His philosophy of salvation, in the order and relation of doctrine and morals, is expressed thus in his letter to Titus: "**For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.**" So in every letter there is first the doctrinal foundation, and then the application to morals. But as in this letter we have the most complete and systematic statement of the doctrine of grace as a foundation (chapters 10 to 11) so in this, the following section (chapters 12 to 15), we have the most elaborate superstructure of morals.

1. The analysis and order of thought in this great section are --

(1) Salvation by grace through faith obligates the observance of all duties toward GOD the Father on account of what He does for us in the gift of His Son, in election, predestination, justification and adoption (12:1).

(2) It obligates the observances of all duties toward GOD the HOLY SPIRIT for what he does in us in regeneration and sanctification (12:2).

(3) It obligates the observance of all duties toward the church, with its diversity of gifts in unity of body (12:3-13).

(4) It obligates the observance of all duties toward the individual neighbor in the outside world (12:14-21).

(5) It obligates the observance of all duties to the neighbours, organized as society or state (13:1-13).

(6) It obligates the observance of all duties arising from the Christian's individual relation to CHRIST the Saviour (13:14; 14:7-12).

(7) It obligates the observance of all duties arising from the Christian's individual brother in CHRIST (14:1 to 15:7).

(8) The last obligation holds, regardless of the race distinctions, Jew and Gentile (15:8-24), and includes the welcome of the Apostle to the Gentiles, prayer for the welcome and success of his service toward the Jewish Christians in their need (15:25-29), and prayer for his deliverance from the unbelieving Jews (15:30-33).

2. As to the sum of these obligations --

(1) They cover the whole scope of morals, whether in the Decalogue, as given to the Jews, or the enlarged Christian code arising from grace.

(2) They conform to relative proportions, making first and paramount morals toward GOD, whether Father, Son, or HOLY SPIRIT, not counting that morals at all which leaves out GOD in either His unity of nature, or trinity of persons, and making that second, subordinate and correlative which is morals toward men.

The duty toward GOD the Father, in view of what He has done for us in grace and mercy, is to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to GOD (12:1), and respect His prerogative (12:19), which is illustrated by Paul elsewhere. He says, "**I die daily**," meaning that though alive, his members were on the rack of death all the time. He says, I mortify my members and, "**I keep under my body**"; that is, he kept his redeemed soul on top, dominating his body. He made his body as "Prometheus bound" on the cold rock of Caucasus, vultures devouring his vitals every day as they were renewed every night, a living death.

Our duty toward GOD, the HOLY SPIRIT, in view of what He graciously does in us is found in

12:2: Negatively -- Let not the regenerate soul be conformed with the spirit and course of this evil world, whether in the lust of the eye or pride of life. Positively -- Be transformed in continual sanctification in the renewing of the mind; that is, working out the salvation which the SPIRIT works in us, as He, having commenced a good work in us (regeneration) continues it (through sanctification) until the day of JESUS CHRIST. Or, as this Apostle says elsewhere, CHRIST, having been formed in us the hope of glory, we are changed into that image from glory to glory as by the SPIRIT of the LORD.

3. The duties toward the church are found in 12:3-13:

(1) Not to think more highly of one's self in view of the other members of the church -- Here are a lot of people in one church; now let not one member put himself too high in view of the other members of that church.

(2) To think only according to the proportion of faith given to him for the performance of some duty -- If I am going to put an estimate upon myself in the relation to my church members, a standard or estimate should be, What is the proportion of faith given to me? Say A has so much, B has so much, C has so much, D has so much, and E has least of all; then E ought not to think himself the biggest of all. The Standard of judgment is the proportion of faith given to each member.

(3) He must respect the unity of the church as a body -- in that illustration used the church is compared to a body having many members. The hand must not say, "I am everything," and the eye must not say, "I am everything," nor the ear, "I am everything," nor the foot, "I am everything." In estimating, we have to estimate the function of each part, the proportion of power given to that part, and it is always not as a sole thing, but in its relation to every other part -- that is a duty that a church member must perform. Sometimes a man easily forgets that he is just one of many in the organism.

(4) He must respect its diversity of gifts -- That is one part of it that I comply with. If there is anything that rejoices my heart, it is the diversity of gifts that GOD puts in the church. I never saw a Christian in my life that could not do some things better than anybody else in the world. I would feel very mean indeed if I did not rejoice in the special gifts of other members in the church. What a pity it would be if we had just one kind of mold, and everybody was run through like tallow so as to make every candle alike. Their duty of the church is to respect the unity of the body, and its diversity of gifts.

(5) Each gift is to be exercised with its appropriate corresponding limitation.

4. The duties to the individual neighbor of the outside world, even though hostile to us, are found in 12:14-21.

(1) To bless him when he persecutes.

(2) To be sympathetic toward him, rejoicing in his joy, and weeping in his sorrow.

(3) Several Christians should not be of different mind toward him -- The expression in the text is to be of the same mind one toward another. What is the point of that? We are dealing now with individuals outside. Here is A, a Christian; B, a Christian, C, a Christian; and the outsider is watching. A makes one impression on his mind, B makes a different one, and C makes still a

different one. The influence from these several Christians does not harmonize; it is not like-minded; but if he sees A, B, C, all in different measures perhaps, be every one of the same mind, then he sees that there is a unifying power in Christian. How often do we hear it said, "If every Christian were like you, I would want to be one, but look yonder at that deacon, or at that sister"! We should be like-minded to those outside so that every Christian that comes in may make a similar impression for CHRIST's sake.

(4) We should not, in dealing with him, respect big outsiders only, but condescend to the lowly -- to men of low estate. Some of them are very rich, some of them are influential socially, some of them are what we call poor, country folk. We should not be high-minded in our dealings with these sinners, but condescend to men of low estate. Let them feel that we are willing to go and help them.

(5) We should not let our wisdom toward him be self-conceit; that is, let it not seem to him that way.

(6) When he does evil to us, we should not repay in kind.

(7) We should let him see that we are honest men -- Ah, me, how many outsiders are repelled because all Christians do not provide things honest in the sight of the outside world!

(8) So far as it lies in us, we should be peaceable with him -- That means that it is absolutely impossible to be peaceable with a man that has no peace in him. He wants to fuss anyhow, and goes around with a chip on his shoulder. He goes around snarling and showing his teeth. There are some people that are not peaceable, but so far as our life is concerned, we should be peaceable with them.

(9) We should not avenge on him wrongs done us by him -- Vengeance belongs to GOD; we should give place to GOD's wrath.

(10) We should feed him if hungry, and give him drink if thirsty.

(11) We should not allow ourselves to be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. We should not get off when we come in contact with evil people, but just hang on and overcome evil with good.

5. The duties to the state are as follows:

(1) Be subject to higher powers, and do not resist them, for (a) GOD ordained them, (b) GOD makes them a terror to evil works, (c) GOD's minister for good, (d) and for conscience' sake we must respect the state.

(2) Pay our taxes.

(3) Whatever is due to each office: "Render . . . honour to whom honour."

(4) Keep out of debt: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another."

(5) Keep the moral code: "**Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet.**"

(6) Avoid the world's excesses, revellings, and such like.

6. The duties toward GOD the Son, in view of what He has done for us and in view of our vital union with Him, are set forth in 14:7-12.

- (1) Negatively: Live not unto self
- (2) Positively: Live unto JESUS, respecting His prerogatives and servants.

7. Let us now look at the duties to individual Christians -- We have considered the Christians as a body. What are the duties to individual Christians? Romans 14:1 to 15:7 contains the duty to individual Christians. Let us enumerate these duties somewhat:

(1) Receive the weak in faith -- We have a duty to every weak brother; receive him, but not to doubtful disputations. If we must have our abstract, metaphysical, hair-splitting distinctions, let us not spring them on the poor Christian that is just alive.

(2) We should not judge him censoriously, instituting a comparison between us and him; we should not say to him, "Just look at me."

(3) We should not hurt him by doing things, which though lawful to us, will cause him to stumble. The explanation there is in reference to a heathen custom. The heathen offered sacrifices to their gods, and after the sacrifice they would hang up the parts not consumed and sell as any other butchered meat. Could we stand up like Paul and say, "It won't hurt me to eat that meat, but there is a poor fellow just born into the Kingdom, and he is weak in the faith. He sees me eating this meat that has been offered in sacrifice to idols, and he stumbles; therefore, I will not eat meat"? He draws the conclusion that if a big fellow can do that he can too, and he goes and worships the idols. The strong, through the exercise of his liberty that he could have done without, caused his fall into idolatry. That is what he meant when he wrote, "Do not hurt him; do not cause him to stumble." He gives two reasons why we must not cause him to stumble on account of a little meat. He says, (a) **"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."** (b) If we consider this weak brother, our consideration will be acceptable to CHRIST, and approved of men, but if we trample on the poor fellow that is weak in the faith, CHRIST won't approve of it, and men won't approve of it.

(4) Follow the things that make for peace -- It is individual Christians that we are talking about, and we come in contact with them where we have A, B, C, D, and E and the first thing we know a little root of bitterness springs up among them and stirs up a disagreement. The point is that we should follow the things that make for peace, just as far as we can, and sometimes that will take us a good ways. He gives this illustration where he says, "If my eating meat offered to idols causes my brother to stumble, then I am willing to take a total abstinence pledge." Then he extends it: "Nor drink wine, nor do anything whereby my brother is caused to stumble." There is meat other than that which is offered to idols.

(5) Bear his infirmities -- One man said, "There is much of human nature in the mule, but more of the mule in human nature." The best man I ever knew had some infirmities, and I can see some of mine with my eyes shut, and I believe better with them shut than with them open. We all have infirmities in some direction or another.

(6) We should seek to please him rather than to please ourselves -- We are not to sacrifice a principle, but if we can please him without sacrificing a principle, rather than please ourselves, why not do it? Let us make him feel good if we can. This is the duty to the individual Christian.

The duties of Christian Jews to Gentile neighbors are found in 15:8-24. There they are all elaborated. Even in the Jew's Bible, all through its parts, it is shown that GOD intended to save the Gentiles. The duty of Gentile Christians to the Jews is found in 15:27, showing that there is a debt and that it ought to be paid.

II. SOME FRAGMENTS OF CHAPTERS 14 TO 16

These Scriptures have been covered generally in the discussion already. So in this chapter it is our purpose only to gather up the fragments that nothing may be lost.

1. Then let us commence by expounding 14:9:

(1) The death of CHRIST was on the cross; the living after death is His resurrection -- life in glory. (Compare Revelation 1:18)

(2) The end of CHRIST's dying and reviving is said to be that He might be LORD of both the dead and the living, the dead meaning those bodies sleeping the grave to be raised from the grave at His coming.

The latter clause of 14:14 does not make our thought of what is sin the standard of sin, but GOD's law alone determines that. It means that when a man violates his own conception of the law he is in spirit a sinner, seeing that he goes contrary to his standard.

2. The doctrine of 14:20-21 is that what is not sin per se may become sin under certain conditions arising from our relations to others. For example:

(1) Eating meat offered to idols is lawful per se (Romans 14:14; I Corinthians 8:4).

(2) But if it causes a weak brother to worship idols, then charity may justify a total abstinence pledge (14:21; I Corinthians 8:13).

(3) This thing lawful per se, but hurtful in its associations and effects on the weak, may be also the object of church-prohibition, the HOLY SPIRIT concurring (Acts 15:29).

(4) And a church refusing to enforce the prohibition becomes the object of CHRIST's censure and may forfeit its office or candle (Revelation 2:14-16).

3. In this whole chapter (14), particularly in the paragraph, verses 22-23, (1) what is the meaning of the word, "faith," (2) does the closing paragraph make all accountability dependent on subjective moral conviction, and (3) does it teach that the actions of unbelievers are sins?

(1) Faith, in this chapter throughout, does not so much refer to the personal acceptance of CHRIST as to the liberty in practice to which that acceptance entitles -- So that, "**weak in the faith**," verse 1, does not imply that some strongly accept CHRIST and others lightly. But the matter under discussion is, What liberty in practice does faith allow with reference to certain specified things, the lawfulness or expediency of which may be a matter of scruple in the sensitive but uninformed conscience of some? One may have faith in CHRIST to receive Him though in his ignorance he may not go as far as another in the conception of the liberty to which this faith entitles him as to what foods are clean or unclean, what days are holy or common and

as to partaking in feasts of meats which have been offered to idols.

(2) The "**whatsoever**" of verse 23 is neither absolute nor universal in its application. It is limited first to the specified things or their kind, and second, to believers, having no reference to outsiders making no profession of faith.

(3) Subjective moral conviction is not a fixed and ultimate standard of right and wrong, which would be a mere sliding scale, but it is GOD's law; yet this chapter, and particularly its closing paragraph, seems to indicate that the wilful violation of conscience contains within itself a seed of destruction as has been intimated in chapter 2:14-16.

(4) If this whole chapter was not an elaboration of the duties of a Christian toward his fellow Christian, both presumed to be members of one body, the particular church, it might plausibly be made to appear that "faith" in this chapter means belief of what is right and wrong.

4. The theme of chapter 16 is The Courteous Recognition of the Christian Merits and Labors of all Workers for CHRIST, Each in His Own or Her Own Sphere. The great lessons of this chapter are --

(1) As we have in this letter the most complete and systematic statement of Christian doctrine, and the most systematic and elaborate application of morals based on the doctrine, so appropriately its conclusion is the most elaborate and the most courteous recognition of the Christian merits and labors of all classes of Kingdom workers in their respective spheres.

(2) With the Letter to Philemon, it is the highest known expression of delicate and exquisite courtesy.

(3) It is a revelation of the variety and value of woman's work in the apostolic churches, and in all her fitting spheres of activity.

(4) It is a revelation of the value of great and consecrated laymen in the work of the Kingdom.

(5) It is a revelation of the fellowship of apostolic Christians and their self-sacrificing devotion to each other.

(6) It magnifies the graces of hospitality.

(7) It magnifies the power of family religion whether of husband and wife, brother and sister, more distant kindred, or master and servant.

(8) It digs up by the roots a much later contention, and heresy of one big metropolitan church in a city, with a dominant bishop, exercising authority over smaller churches and "inferior clergy" in that it clearly shows that there was not in central Rome one big church, with a nascent pope, lording it over suburban and village churches. There was not here no "church of Rome," but several distinct churches in Rome whose individuality and equality are distinctly recognized.

(9) It shows the fellowship of churches, however remote from each other, and their comity and co-operation in Kingdom work.

(10) It shows in a remarkable way how imperial Rome with its worldwide authority, its military roads and shiplines, its traffic to and fro from center to each point of the circumference of world-territory and its amalgamation of nations, was a providential preparation for the propagation of a universal religion.

(11) The various names of those saluted and saluting, about thirty-five in all, indicating various nationalities, not only show that the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles is broken down in the churches, but that in the Kingdom "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

(12) But the lesson seems greatest in its mercy and privileges conferred on women and slaves.

(13) The homiletic value, in pulpit themes suggested, from these various names, labors and conditions, which Spurgeon seems to have recognized most of all preachers.

5. Let us now expound the entreaty in verses 17-18 containing the following points.

(1) We need to distinguish between those that "**cause divisions**" and those that "**put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall.**" The "divisions" would most likely come from a bigoted and narrow Jew insisting on following Moses in order to become a Christian, as in the churches of Galatia, Corinth and elsewhere, but those causing "**an occasion to fall**" (as in 14:13-22) would likely be Gentiles insisting on the extreme of liberty in the eating of meats offered to idols, and like things.

(2) While both classes are in the church, and not outsiders, as many teach, yet neither class possesses the spiritual mindedness and charity of a true Christian, but under the cloak of religion they serve their own passions for bigotry in one direction or license in another direction, utterly misapprehending the spiritual character of the kingdom of GOD.

(3) Both classes are to be avoided as enemies of the cross of CHRIST (Compare Philippians 3:18; Gal. 5:19-23).

6. In verse 20, there are three points:

(1) There is an allusion to the promise in Genesis 3:11 that the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.

(2) This was fulfilled by CHRIST's triumph on the cross over Satan (Colossians 2:15).

(3) And will be fulfilled in all CHRIST's seed at the final advent.

QUESTIONS FOR STIMULATION AND REVIEW

1. What are the prevalent characteristics of all Paul's teachings concerning the Gospel? Illustrate.
2. What is Paul's attitude toward the modern cry, "Give us morals and away with dogma"?
3. How is this thought especially emphasized in this letter?
4. What is the analysis and order of thought in this letter in chapters 12 to 15?
5. What is the duty toward GOD the Father, in view of what He has done for us in grace and mercy?
6. What is the meaning of "living sacrifice"? Illustrate.
7. What is our duty toward GOD the HOLY SPIRIT, in view of what He graciously does in us?
8. What are our duties toward the church?

9. What are our duties toward the individual neighbor of the outside world, even though hostile to us?
10. What are our duties toward the state?
11. What are our duties toward GOD the Son, in view of what He has done for us and in view of our vital union with Him?
12. What are the duties to individual Christians?
13. What are the duties of Christian Jews to Gentile neighbors?
14. What three things are noted in Romans 14:9?
15. Does the latter clause of 14:14 make our thought of what is sin the standard of sin? If not, what does it mean?
16. What is the doctrine of 14:20-21? Give examples.
17. In the whole of chapter 14, particularly in the paragraph, verses 22-23, (1) What is the meaning of the word "faith"? (2) Does the closing paragraph make all accountability dependent on subjective moral conviction?
18. What are the great lessons of chapter 16?
19. Expound the entreaty in 16:17-18.
20. What are the three points of 16:20?

LET US RETHINK THE CHAPTER

I. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION BY GRACE APPLIED TO PRACTICAL LIFE

-- Paul always insisted on doctrine and morals --

1. The analysis and order in this great section
2. The sum of these obligations
3. Duties toward the church (12:3-13)
4. Duties to the neighbor outside
5. Duties to the state
6. Duties to GOD
7. Duties to individual Christians

II. SOME FRAGMENTS OF CHAPTERS 14 to 16

1. Commence by expounding 14:9
2. Expounding 14:20-21
3. Expounding chapter 14, especially verses 22-23
4. Expounding chapter 16
5. The entreaty in 16:17-18
6. The three points in verse 20.

~ end of book ~